
Proceedings

Society of Dance History Scholars

Twenty-First Annual Conference

University of Oregon

Eugene, Oregon

18 - 21 June 1998

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CONFERENCE PAPERS

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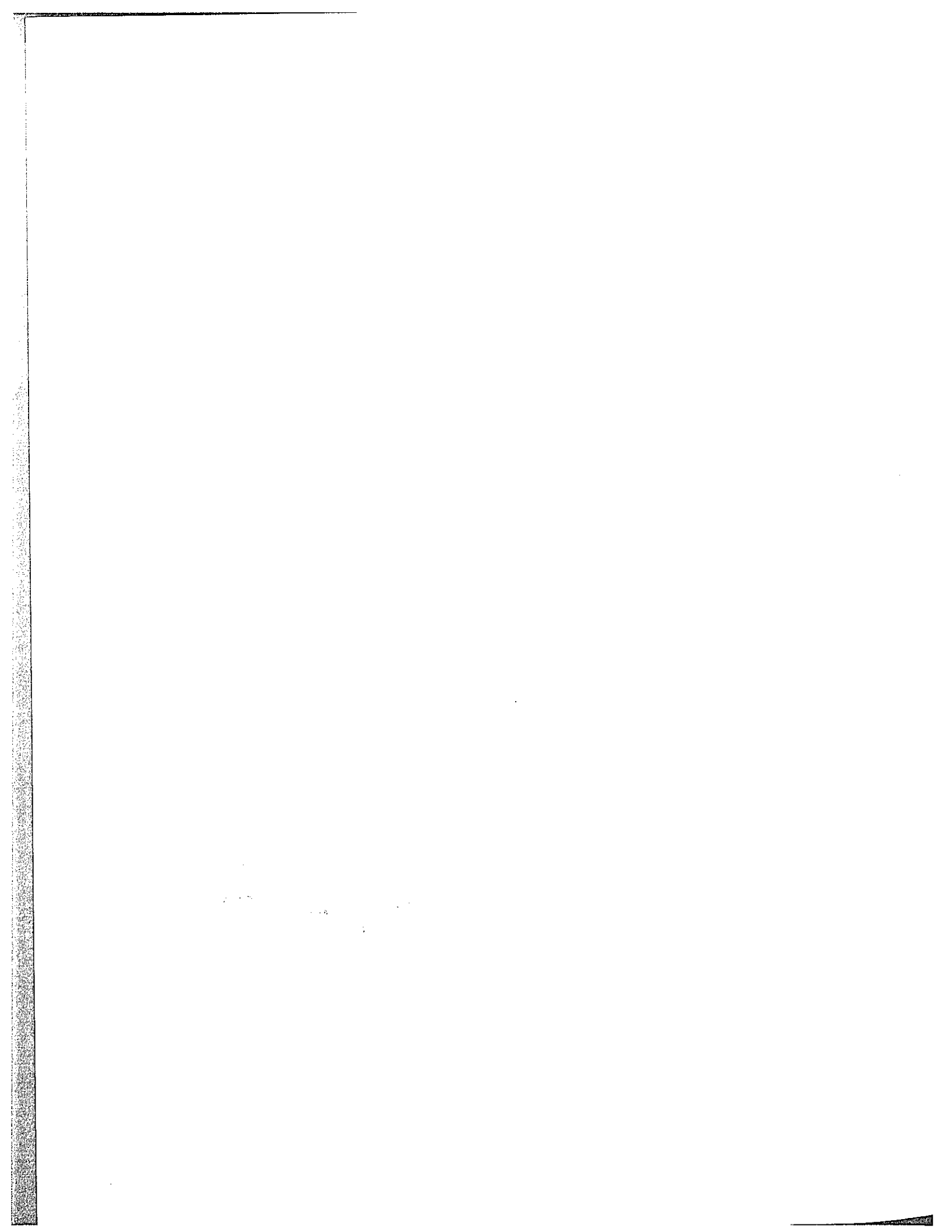
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ENCIRCLING LMA: TALKING AND DANCING IN
CLAIRE PORTER'S *GREEN DRESS CIRCLE*

Maura Keefe

In Claire Porter's solo *Green Dress Circle*, a circle is used as both the narrative structure of the dance as well as the main movement theme. The dance enumerates a variety of circles: gestural paths, bodily shapes, and walking patterns, all of which, in the end, circle back to the beginning of the dance. These circles vary in size, in orientation in space, and in direction. Using analytic tools from Laban Movement Analysis, or LMA, I discerned movement patterns that led to an interpretation of the overall choreographic strategy.

Typically the opening dance in an evening of solo works, for the purposes of this talk, I refer to a performance of *Green Dress Circle* from University of California, Riverside in February 1991. The piece begins with Porter walking downstage as the lights come up, her patterned dress belted tightly and high heeled t-strap shoes tapping distinctly as she walks. Hands in her pockets, she looks into the audience, frankly. She welcomes us, "Good evening...." To those unfamiliar with Porter's appearance, up until this point, one might wonder whether this is a house manager or a presenter. As she greets the audience, her hands come out of her pockets, palms rotating in unison up toward the ceiling, and then down again, accentuating her words. Her right arm extends forward on the diagonal, "there's an exit here..." and then she repeats the gesture toward the left, "...and here." All of this is oddly in keeping with the persona of house manager, lines blandly delivered with all of the drama of an airline attendant. However, after pointing out the exits, she begins to point to the flats that line the edge of the stage, "there are flats, here, here, and here" and then the curtain along the back wall. "And it's black, wouldn't you say?" She turns to look at the audience and back at the curtain. With her elbow bent, and right index finger extended, she points first to her green earring, then her dress at hip height, and then twice traces the outline of a circle on a vertical plane as she says: "And here's a green, here's a dress and here's a circle."

Let me back up slightly, to explain what drew me to this dance in the first place. Within the past twenty-five years in the United States, there has been a proliferation of theatrical dances which choreograph spoken text as an integral part of the dance. In these dances, which I call "talking dances," the talking is not relegated to the role of accompanying the movement, nor is the movement merely illustrative of the text. The choreography of the dances combines the two distinct discourses to construct pieces in which neither the talking nor the dancing can stand alone. From the position of the audience, the most striking thing these dances share is their use of talking. Despite the preponderance of text with dance, it still continues to shock audiences the mute dancing body begins to speak.

Talking dances bring together the physical and the spoken, already challenging divisions between the mind and body. However, speaking, traditionally, carries more weight than moving in Western cultures. We more readily recognize that meaning is made with words rather than

gestures. To resist cultural prejudice, and to balance the disparity between talking and moving, I sought a means of concentrating on the movement in these dances. LMA privileges the body, solely considering the way bodies move. With that attention to movement comes an inverted challenge: how can Laban Movement Analysis accommodate talking? With this question resonating, I look to Porter's work.

Through LMA, I discovered three critical aspects of *Green Dress Circle* that define the choreography: first, Porter's use of peripheral spatial tension to keep her centered, tuning the audience's attention on her corporeal presence, no matter how far she leads us away into conjured spaces with her talking; second, the ways she uses words which have visual resonance as triggers for disrupting the expanding circle around her to return focus to her body; and finally, how she finds moments of interiority within the very presentational piece by moving into shape flow when she is silent. All three of these choreographic moves strategically combine talking and dance to construct a dance that defies a linear narrative by making it curvilinear and resists the objectification of a woman's body by continually interrupting the dance's momentum, forcing the audience to continually redefine their reception of her.

Back now to the dance. Porter has just said: "Here's a green, here's a dress, here's a circle," for the first time of many times. The tracing of the circle with her finger is deliberate and weighted, emphasizing the outside edge, the way a circle curves. Her careful action is the harbinger of the importance of the shape for the dance.

She shifts back into her house manager persona, verbally describing the space. Her description moves beyond the stage area and exits. She gives explicit directions out into the lobby, into the parking lot, and then into the city of Riverside and its surroundings. She gestures fully, directly aiming to emphasize direction in her description. However clear her directions are, she does not let the audience's imagination travel away from her. She disrupts her own progression each time she mentions words that are a color, and performs the "this a green, this is a dress, this is a circle" talking movement sequence. For example, the beige walls of the lobby, the Riverside street named Lemon and the nearby city of Redlands all trigger her green-dress-circle. The words Porter uses to disrupt the enlarging space around her are visual. We can see the beige walls, we can picture lemon yellow, and with her deliberate phrasing, the city of Redlands becomes "Red - lands." Porter physically acknowledges the multiple possibilities of words while clearly accentuating what she considers most pertinent. For example, as she says "Lemon is a street, is a fruit, is a yellow, is a color," her hand makes a series of similarly patterned circular gestures. The relative repetitiveness demonstrates an equality among the definitions of lemon until her hand's motion decelerates and the circle becomes more specific as she says: "is a color but this is a green."

Porter's description moves further and further away from the geography surrounding the dance studio. Streets in Riverside give way to city, state, and country names. With each name, she points to the place's location in space relative to her own position. The points in space do not radiate out from her at the center, rather she indicates them as points on a circle, using peripheral spatial tension. In one sequence, the sound of the words create an almost musical score, the rhythmic structure matching the arcing of her carving arms. "San Francisco, Maine, Miami, Panama, Canada, Argentina, Alaska, Australia, Greenland..." And, of course, the green of

Greenland leads to a green-dress-circle. Porter expands the kinesphere beyond the realm of her own body and exceeds the limits of the visually apparent stage space. What starts out as a relatively simple mapping of the space surrounding her body, through her verbal description extends into imagined places. Through the maintenance of consistent movement themes, Porter's global reckoning of the solar system appears just as reasonable as her discussion of the flats which line the stage and the color of the curtain that hangs along the backstage wall. However, she keeps herself central by maintaining peripheral spatial tension.

Another use of words with visual resonance as a trigger are words that are shapes. For example, at one point Porter moves her fingers along the hem of her dress saying "This a straight which becomes a circle." As Porter follows the hem, she inscribes a circle on the horizontal plane. Despite the shift from the vertical to horizontal plane, Porter maintains the peripheral spatial tension, keeping her body at the center of the circle.

As each one of the color or shape words becomes vivid, the audience is then drawn back to Porter herself. She reminds them that she stands there, wearing a green dress, making circles. No matter how far away from the stage space she has led the audience, mapping larger and larger circles around her, she remains there life-size, a clever woman making witty connections between place names and colors. Moving fully, Porter controls the directions of the dance, toward her and away from her, she chooses when to direct the attention outward -- to Greenland, to Mars the red planet -- and when to call the attention back to herself. She is not merely carried along in a narrative flow.

There are two brief sections in which Porter stops speaking. There is a marked difference from Porter's appearance as she moves in silence from the rest of the dance, when she alternates between the house manager persona and the wryly witty woman who demands our attention. Using LMA, I have come to realize that in the silent sections, Porter moves with what Laban terminology calls shape-flow. Moving in shape-flow means moving in relation to one's own body, without an apparent awareness of the external environment. In each of the two wordless examples, Porter begins with a demonstration of circles shaped by parts of her body and then gradually shifts into shape-flow.

In the first, she comments "These too are circles," before falling silent and demonstrating a variety of circular gestures and paths. She bends slightly forward, stands on her right leg and drops her focus away from the audience. Keeping her elbows and left knee virtually still, the lower limbs circle rapidly. The three rapidly circling extremities again utilize peripheral spatial tension around the fixed points of her joints. The centers of these smaller circles are fixed at points along the larger circle of her kinesphere. These circles melt away and she moves into shape-flow as she undulates her spine and shifts her pelvis from side to side. The movements still have a circular echo, but Porter's focus is internal. In the second wordless example, she begins by carving a circle in front of her torso with her arms on the horizontal plane. She maintains that shape as she leans over and steps through the circle almost as if stepping through a hoop. After stepping through the hoop, the shaping stops and shape-flow begins. She puts her left hand through an odd flap in her dress and grasps her right hand, tossing her head from side to side, and shifting her weight from foot to foot. Her focus, so recently external as she moved through the hoop of her arms, is inward in this section. While I do not know Porter's intention in

moving with an interiority when silent and with an exteriority while talking, the distinction between the two styles of movement became illuminated through LMA. Certainly Porter is no less articulate silent than speaking, but within the context of a talking dance, it is imperative to notice the implications of the vocal stillnesses as well as the talking.

I want to pull back from Porter's piece for a consideration of the larger possibilities of LMA, what I earlier called the inverted challenge to LMA. How can the system accommodate talking? First, to address the practical side of the question, in motifying talking dances, I placed the spoken words along the left hand side of the motif, spatially paralleling the simultaneous movement. As one would read a movement motif from the bottom of the page upwards, so too does one read the spoken text of the dance. This has proved helpful for illuminating the times when the words and movement contradict or complement each another. For example, in seeing the words along side of a movement motif, it becomes easier to see if Porter always performs a circle when she says the word circle, and to discern that the one word "circle" has many embodied definitions. Further, the silences in Porter's dance became more distinct when I placed Porter's words, or in this case the absence of them, on the motifs. Since I am looking at dances where neither the talking nor the dancing is more important than the other, it is critical to evaluate the changing concordances between them. Placing the talking on the motifs has proved useful for carefully examining the timing of the relationships.

But there is a further step to consider: How might it be useful to consider using the same language developed with LMA for the analysis of movement to analyze the talking itself? In the vernacular of everyday life, we already use some of the words. We describe somebody as talking directly or indirectly, saying something lightly or stating it strongly. To take it a step further would mean actually motifying the language. For example, does the dancer move quickly while speaking in a sustained manner? Does the dancer move freely while speaking in a bound way. For example, with regard to Porter's work, one might ask what would be the equivalent of shape-flow in talking? Using the same system to consider different aspects of the choreographic structures of talking dances might serve to further erase the distinction between the mind and the body.

The piece comes to a close when Porter says "This is the end, but it is also the beginning. We have come full circle." Throughout the piece, Porter has controlled the flow of the narrative of the dance by reshaping it. Her performance resists the typical objectification of women in a linear narrative by creating circles with her moving body, her talking, and the overall structure of her choreography. The narrative is far from linear. Rather than having a clear beginning, middle, and end, with a distinct climax, the piece is ultimately a circle, ending as she says, at the beginning. She further resists the limitations of linearity potentially posed by the curvilinear structure by breaking the circle with a series of jarring interruptions reminding the audience of her material, corporeal presence.

She moves the audience out of the present tense of the theatre and the present space of the theatre by giving them directions. By doing this, Porter invites the audience to imagine their bodies outside of the space of the theatre, travelling with her with on the narrative journey she undertakes, waiting to see how she will return from places as far flung as the Milky Way and Mars. Through the use of the analytical tools provided by LMA, I have come to see how the

talking and the dancing in *Green Dress Circle* are inexorably tied together. Using the system helped me to discern three of Porter's choreographic strategies: the use of peripheral spatial tension, the use of moments of shape-flow, and the use of words with a visual resonance to disrupt narrative flow. Porter shrewdly combines her physical articulation with a droll manner of speaking. By circling again and again back to her self with the green-dress-circle, she is not dwarfed by the magnitude of Greenland, or the unfamiliarity of Riverside's geography. Grounded with a bodily awareness in shifting environments, Porter dances a piece that situates her self and stakes a claim. Porter's piece, cloaked in witty delivery, serves as a strong testament for asserting one's place in the world.

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COLLIDING KINESPHERES: INVESTIGATING THE "POINT" BETWEEN LABANANALYSIS AND CONTACT IMPROVISATION

Karen Schaffman

In *Die Welt des Taenzers* (1920), Rudolf Laban states that his "aim is not to establish norms and dogmas but to awaken dance insights."¹ Intrigued by this assertion, I took up the task of applying Laban's concepts of movement to the analysis of Contact Improvisation² and asked the following questions: What can Labananalysis offer to the discussion of Contact Improvisation? How do concepts of Labananalysis highlight principles of the form? And, how does this analysis of Contact Improvisation draw attention to the limits of Labananalysis?

My experience for nearly a decade as a practitioner of Contact Improvisation deeply informed this inquiry. Because I'm able to experientially understand the codes of Contact Improvisation, I am equipped with tools to enrich and complicate the analysis. Additionally, the flexibility allowed by Motif writing in Laban Movement Analysis accommodated for unique and innovative perspectives that don't fall neatly into Labanotation. Motif writing invokes creative solutions that result from one's subjective experience. Stepping inside the Laban Movement Analysis system, LMA, I watched more closely than ever. Frankly, I liked the image of climbing into someone else's kinesphere, and enjoyed the visual and empathetic ride: Lofting my mass upwards, spine extended and spiraling around her shoulders, a quick fall downwards into a soft lap, as the system and I rolled swiftly together. But here again, my familiarity with the codes of Contact Improvisation enabled my kinesthetic response that followed the rush of spontaneous interaction. When I discovered that my dancing actually got better from the hours spent observing a spiral or an inverted fall, I understood how important observation, live and through video feedback, was in the early years of the development of the form.

During *any* given moving moment in Contact Improvisation, an infinite number of simultaneous decisions occur consciously and unconsciously that create a series of ongoing actions. One movement enables another, one muscle contracts/the other extends, the elbow folds/the shoulderblade drops, one part floats/another stabilizes, and so forth. Motif writing asks that the observer choose from the array of activity to determine the central point of a movement. Is the most important thing about this (*flick the wrist*) the Indirectness, the Lightness, or is this movement about wrist initiation? Am I *Directing* my eyes to the page or *pressing* my hands into the podium? LMA can help deepen the process of movement awareness, by drawing one's attention not only to where a movement is happening in space, but how a movement is executed, what Laban terms Effort. However, Laban's methods bring along an established vocabulary that reinforces conventions which may *not* apply to the analysis of a particular form. Labananalysis is based in visual observation, Contact Improvisation in tactility. These basic premises posed one of the many challenges that this project presented.

When I began investigating the theories that underlined Laban's approach to movement, I discovered what I considered a major contradiction to his proposal "not to establish norms and dogmas" in regards to dance. In 1927, at the first German Congress on Dance, Laban argued that

A work of art should be formed on the basis of artistic laws; sheer intuition is not enough and that which arises out of improvisation is a natural manifestation - not art. All capacities of man, such as will-power, feelings, and intellect, are engaged in the forming of art.³

A crucial concept in Laban's theory is that bodies move in space as a reaction to inner emotional impulses that correspond to certain Effort and Spatial "affinities." None of this work applies to the practice of Contact Improvisation, a form that privileges the activity of reading bodily sensation over emotional drives. Contact Improvisation constructed itself from the aesthetics and concerns of the postmodern dance movement and experimental environment of the 1960s and early 1970s. Contact Improvisation is an approach to technique and performance that explores the relationships of bodies moving together with immediacy and attention to gravity, space and flow while focusing on weight and tactility to read bodily sensation. Each dancer gives up their personal "reach space," what Laban calls a kinesphere, in order to attend to his/herself always in relation to another body. Kinespheres join, merge, collide, overlap, collapse, extend, and mingle. Contact Improvisation, an artform based directly on the "natural" laws of physics, relies on the conscious and unconscious process of composition in the moment. My project emphasizes the complexity of ongoing choice-making to underline improvisation as a compositional art. How does one apply Laban's modernist notions of emotionality and movement to the analysis of a dance form that developed out of postmodern dance and the 60s revolution? Where does one begin to demonstrate principles of a form through a system that refuses to acknowledge the intellect of improvisation?

These questions established the foundation upon which I undertook a very specific project: I utilized the video documentary *Fall After Newton*, which followed the practice of Contact Improvisation over an eleven year period. The performers were Nancy Stark Smith and Steve Paxton, two of the most important and influential figures in Contact Improvisation. *Fall After Newton* gave me the opportunity to compare different moments of flying and catching that were already distilled and framed. I've written eight motifs that represent distinct historical stages of the development of Contact Improvisation and highlight some of the grounding principles of the form. For instance, (*show video clip*) one of the motifs I draw is a moment from "Magnesium," choreographed by Paxton in 1972, a raucous study of falling and collision which is considered by many as the kernel of Contact Improvisation. Through numerous viewings, I discovered that this piece was not only about uncertainty in motion, but I also observed that the dance was an *invitation* for unpredictability. By choosing to turn away from an ongoing collision, the interaction became intentionally more unknown. This next segment shows Smith dancing together with Danny Lepkoff in a quintessential moment of survival and risk. Here, I raise the notion of the body's *intelligence* when working on a reflexive level. By training hyper-sensitivity in body awareness, dancers trust their bodies in inverted relationships to gravity, and become interested, if not comfortable, in disorientating circumstances. This motif illustrates the way that Contact Improvisation embodies the notion of aiming but not fixing in any one direction of Spatial Effort. Dancers in this form recover from precarious places by remaining fluid and dancing in an overall state of availability.

For the purpose of this panel, I've chosen to examine closely one motif from my project to highlight ways that LMA does and does not apply to Contact Improvisation. I was originally

drawn to this next section of material, a 1978 performance by Steve Paxton and Nancy Stark Smith, because of the sustained variation of flying it presents. (*show clip*) Smith manages to prolong a long flight by keeping her weight extremely active as she's twirled around and around upside down. The motif illustrates the complex dynamics between two active partners who continually read and sense the ongoing shifts of weight in themselves and between one another. While possibilities of stillness exist, movement never stops. Paxton investigates support and momentum as Smith explores ways she can maintain flight through various exertions of Effort.

While this motif exemplifies the complexity and diversity of activity indicated by each partner individually, precisely *how* these bodies meet remained unclear. Because motif does not provide a method for illustrating this crucial aspect of the form, I developed a system for specifying *how* dancers meet at the moving "point" of contact. I found that by inserting action symbols into the relationship bows, reading the particularities of weight support became more precise. However, the action symbols are limited in their ability to describe the complex and changing articulation of bodies merging their kinespheres. Therefore, based on my experience in the form, I added a series of actions symbols, such as sliding, spilling, and adjusting, to specify the actions.

Drawing mainly from the work of Ann Hutchinson Guest's *Your Move: A New Approach to the Study of Movement and Dance*, I experiment with each motif by looking at the dancing from three tracks highlighting three subject positions. All of these tracks correspond in time in an attempt to maintain the integrity of the entire moment. The left side illustrates the catcher, in a supportive role, while the right side traces the flyer. In the middle track, the contact point takes on a subject position as well. In a Contact Improvisation duet, these three elements merge to create the dance. I will always remember a class when Smith relayed this threefold relationship. Very simply and yet profound in terms of the form, she said something akin to, "in Contact Improvisation, there's you, me, and the dance." With generosity as the underlying agreement between partners, the dance emerges as the third element beyond individual desires. "Body level" symbols may not be apparently important to the analysis of Contact Improvisation, however, I use them to underline the complex and intelligent articulation of the body required by this form. Here you can see how I've inserted action symbols within the relationship bows to describe the action *between* the dancers. For instance, this symbol (M) illustrates a rolling point of contact. Here is a symbol that I added for sliding (Z) that illustrates how Paxton's left arm slides down Smith's ankles. Allow me to flex my newly found tools of analysis by reading a short section of this motif using the vocabulary of LMA.

What follows in this segment of the motif, (*play slow-motion clip*) where Paxton spins Smith around, is a series of folding and unfolding actions of Smith's torso, while at the same time her head falls forward and backward in a constant interplay of Effort. In order to control her head and torso, Smith alternates from a Strong and Free Flowing quality to Boundness. Smith's abdominal work reinforces the counterbalance with Paxton by keeping her Weight active. Paxton's turning subsides as Smith deepens the abdominal contraction and pulls herself up towards her chest by grabbing her thighs. This action is Strong, unexpectedly Free, and very Direct. Paxton supports her by deepening the counterbalance while moving towards Boundness. He now supports Smith on his left leg, having bent his right knee deeply, moving downward and

to the right in the Stable State. His right arm releases contact, bringing Smith's upper dorsal spine to the floor. She quickly rolls out of the action, her airborne flight finally coming to closure, as they maintain rolling point of contact.

How could I share this analysis with one unacquainted with the LMA vocabulary? It might go something like this: Smith is not simply getting whirled around by Paxton, but she contributes to the dynamics of her flight by making choices about how to control her weight. Because the "nature" of this duet is one of generosity and agreement, Paxton accommodates her desire to fly, by counterbalancing and acting as a lever for Smith to turn about. Here, Smith seems to be exploring the weight of her head in an inverted relationship to gravity, supported by her muscular strength. As Paxton's whole body moves towards the floor they maintain a close relationship by rolling over each other. In Contact Improvisation, rolling smoothly and softly *into*, rather than away, from one's partner creates a safe and easy ride through space.

While my motif design may be successful in defining the action where two bodies meet, I now realize the necessity for clarifying the Effort of the contact point. In Contact Improvisation, dancers don't simply meet. Each encounter is specific and changing. Partners may blend or compress. Brush, plop, nudge or embrace. Contact Improvisation is that particular. But can one really obtain this information through visual observation? I'm not sure. Can you tell if I'm "spilling" or "pressing" my weight into this table? Is your head slipping into your hand? Or, are you extending your fingers and pushing your chin upwards?

While I've used the body part symbols to underline the complex articulation the body performs in Contact Improvisation, I am concerned that an overall full-body consciousness has not been identified. Smith is not merely contracting her abdomen, but also rippling her spine, and extending her legs while the eyes follow. The kinesphere doesn't end with Paxton's heels. His heels reach *through* the floor allowing his weight to pour past the wooden surface. Laban's tools allow you to observe only the appearance of the body. But how deep is the contact point? An overemphasis on which body parts are touching and supporting does not satisfy the crucial concept of "mass." Smith's torso doesn't merely meet Paxton's pelvis. The actual support travels through and beyond the point of contact. While it is possible to identify weight support, to track the *moving* mass, the traveling weight support, poses an extremely difficult task.

And can Labananalysis account for the range of senses that informs choice-making in the dance? Practitioners develop skills in hyper-awareness to "tune" their bodies. In the transcript of *Fall After Newton*, Paxton explains:

The main focus of training is retuning the senses. It isn't just the sense of touch which must be expanded, but all the senses must become elastic enough to navigate through spherical space, to handle any position, any acceleration.

My concern is that the spectrum of the sensorial world, cannot be addressed through Laban's theories. Was it the slipperiness from sweat that caused them to release their counterbalance? Or was it the banging on the other side of the floor that initiated a new dynamic? How was the nervous system functioning? This system is not even addressed in Labananalysis nor is there any

particular differentiation between body systems such as the skeletal system verses the muscular system.⁴ Such specificity could help clarify the Effort of the mutable contact point. Do the partners meet skin to skin or tissue to bone? Are they muscling it to remain in counterbalance? Or Lightly communicating spine to spine? What exactly is the quality of the contact point?

What once began as an experiment in applying theories of Laban analysis to the practice of Contact Improvisation, resulted in a few innovative programmatic solutions. But more importantly, this project opened many critical questions regarding the application of Laban analysis to non-modern dance forms. On one hand, I am left wondering how far one should go in adapting one system to another. And, I am more even more critical about the accuracy of the visual eye. On the other hand, I am convinced that studying LMA accompanied by movement exploration *can* deepen the articulation of the body in action and in words.

¹ See Rudolf Laban's *Die Welt des Taenzers*, (1920) p. 9.

² This analysis is not the first to apply Laban analysis to Contact Improvisation. In *Sharing the Dance* (1990), Cynthia Novack used Laban's principles in her analysis of Contact Improvisation. Novack cites Tara McClellan (CMA), whose unpublished manuscript, "Contact Improvisation," (1980) influenced and assisted her investigation.

³ See Vera Maletic's *Body - Space - Expression* (1987) p.10

⁴ Many practitioners of Contact Improvisation have embodied the principles of Body-Mind Centering developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. See Cohen's *Sensing, Feeling, Action* (1993) for her theories on particular sets of bodily systems.

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COMPLICATING MINIMALISM: YVONNE RAINER'S TRIO A, LABAN
MOVEMENT ANALYSIS, AND QUALITATIVE QUANTITIES

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In this paper and the study from which it originated I approach *Trio A* with two questions in mind: how do the "appearance" of the dance and the "doing" of the dance correspond, or relate to each other? and how do my analysis and motif relate to previous critical analyses of Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A*? With the first question I want to focus inquiry on the body constructed by *Trio A* and the compositional strategies that accomplish the overall visually minimalist effect, or affect of the dance. With the second question I examine the way the perception of the dance shifts over time from one critical text to the next, and the way in which these texts deal with Rainer's "minimalism." This paper arises from within a larger project in which I use Laban Movement Analysis (or LMA) and the corresponding motif system to analyze and motif eight movement sequences which appear at various points in the 4 1/2 minute work. For my analysis I worked with the 1978 film of Yvonne Rainer performing *Trio A*. As I worked I found it helpful to learn the movement sequences as I motified them - by allowing *Trio A* to construct my own corporeality I gained a better sense of how I could best convey the minimalist strategies of the dance. As a result, I generated not only the written work and the motifs of the dance, but also a performance which both reconstructed the sequences and enacted historically discursive variations of the dance.

My interest in these questions originally arose in response to Sally Banes's analysis of *Trio A* in her book, Terpsichore in Sneakers. Banes cites *Trio A* as "the signal work both for Rainer and for the entire post-modern dance," and, initially, I set out to examine *Trio A* with Banes's analysis in mind, to see if my use of LMA to "deconstruct" its minimalism would coincide with her findings. I was curious to see if labananalysis could effectively be used to understand the dance and what I might conclude from the analysis. I found Banes's account to be primarily a "descriptive" one; whereas, I sought to determine not only the overall "look" of the dance, but also the work involved in achieving that "look" of minimalism. Sally Banes describes *Trio A* in these words: "The entire four-and-one-half-minute series of constant changes in motion is performed as a single phrase with an uninflected distribution of energy, giving the appearance of a smooth, effortless surface." (Banes: 45) Banes identifies here the predominate effect of Rainer's minimalism: a *visually* even and homogenous investment of energy in the movement.

Banes goes on to claim that this "uninflected" "single phrase" allows the audience to witness the essence of the dance: the movement in itself, or motion. Banes states that in *Trio A*: "The possibility is proposed that dance is neither perfection of technique nor of expression, but quite something else -- the presentation of objects in themselves."

(Banes: 49) In her text she draws from Martin Heidegger's phenomenological essay, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in order to support her analysis of *Trio A's* minimalism. For Banes the dance and the movement take precedence over Rainer's, or the performer's presence as a subject/object in order to reveal the essence of the medium. I agree that one aspect of *Trio A's* minimalism exists in the subversion of the "standard" spectator/performer relationship ("no to the glamour and transcendency of the star image...no to involvement of performer or spectator...no to seduction of spectator by the wiles of the performer. "No Manifesto," Tulane Drama Review, 1965) and works to redefine the role of dancer in the dance; however, the Heideggerian language of her analysis clouds one's view of other equally important issues at stake in the choreography. In *Trio A* Rainer actually works hard to achieve the illusion of the "pedestrian," "neutrality," and the "everyday" in the quality of her movement. This dance has very little to do with letting the "truth of Being" or the "nature" of the movement "shine forth," and everything to do with working within a given historical context to choreograph an anti-aesthetic or anti-performing dancing body.

While the conclusions I draw from my analysis of *Trio A* and its minimalism often coincide with Banes's analysis, my work distinguishes itself from hers in its final understanding of how minimalism operates in the dance and contributes to our notions of dance as an artistic work. My application of Laban Movement Analysis led me to see that Rainer's tactics for a minimalist choreography operate specifically within the Western Theatrical Dance tradition. *Trio A* appears minimal specifically in relation to dance practices such as, Ballet and early Modern Dance (i.e., Graham, Humphrey). (Here, my text agrees with Banes's.) Rainer's written work clearly shows that her interest in creating a minimalist choreography stems from the increasing interest in bringing the everyday into the art world, an interest that she sees not only in sculpture and painting, but also in the work being done by the Judson Dance Theater. In her minimalist choreography, rather than choreograph using movements taken directly from pedestrian activities, or daily life, Rainer chooses movements which resonate more with Ballet and Modern dance forms than with "everyday" activities. Rainer's minimalism relies on diminishing "stylistic" aspects of theatrical dance forms (such as the use of effort, shape, and use of space) to the point that she achieves a kind of visual monotone. This visual monotone presents an ambiguous appearance that conveys a sense of "inattention" and echoes the manner in which one might complete a task, rather than a sense of "performing" movement for an audience.

In LMA terms Rainer achieves her choreographic effects through her "non-use" of Effort, the presence of Shape Flow, and the blurring of the distinction between phrases. An observer distinguishes barely any pauses in the movement, each phrase flows continuously into the next, and no one image, pose, or picture ever ties the work together. Rainer chooses not to "simplify" the movement, or coordination of body parts (at

least not in terms of moving less, or fewer body parts); rather, she choreographs a minimalism that relies on complexity. There are often moments within the dance where Rainer combines disparate Effort factors and body parts in feats of coordination: for example, she jumps from two feet to one foot in neutral Flow with a diminished sense of Strength in the middle of an arm gesture done in neutral Weight and Flow with the exception of the Direct, Light "flick" of her paddle-like hands. The Directness and Lightness of the Effort in the "hand-flick" stands in contrast to the diminished Effort Factors of her larger movements. This choreographic strategy of overlapping larger and smaller movements, and Active and Neutral Effort Factors establishes the complexity of the dancing body, while achieving an overall appearance of diminished Effort and minimal investment. Rainer also avoids confronting the gaze of the audience; though her body at times faces directly downstage, her face always turns away. This physical action self-consciously remarks on ballet's obsession with the line(s) of the body presented to the audience, and the more general theatrical "norms" that teach dancers to choreograph with the audience in mind, as well as with the notion of "front."

Rainer performs *Trio A* in a neutralized (minimized or diminished) Dream State. The "current" of the dance locates itself in the combination of neutral Weight and Flow. Despite the *appearance* of an even, or complete absence of, energy investment, Rainer engages in active Effort Factors (usually in small movements for short amounts of time) at various points throughout the dance. In addition, a few of the motifs clearly reveal how Rainer allows for moments of centralized effort, or focused energy within the movement while still achieving an overall appearance of equality, or neutral effort. These distinct moments of Effort investment manifest themselves in short/small/diminished movements and smaller, or "unusual" body parts against an overall backdrop of larger movement. This results in particular sequences of movements relying on accents and moments of distinct inequalities of energy to create an overall minimal and monotone appearance. Throughout *Trio A* Rainer employs a diminished relationship between limb and core that often creates the feeling of Transverse Spatial Tension even though the choreography predominately uses Peripheral Spatial Tension. My motifs reflect the complexity of the choreography and at the same time show the simplified appearance of the whole. There are two predominate ways in which the actual shape of the body contributes to the complexity and minimalism by helping to establish a "non-dance" appearance. One, the hands lose much of their expressivity in their paddle function with no clear differentiation between the fingers. Two, the line of the body breaks at the elbows, wrists, and knees in Rainer's casually extended limbs. Part of the reason for this variety of perspectives on the dance arises from the very "ambiguous" "nature" of the movement. What I call "ambiguous" both here and in the previous description of the dance is best summed up as the almost constant presence of neutral Weight and Flow in conjunction with her continuous