

Shape¹

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Abstract

This article results from presentations at conferences in Germany and the United States in 1993 e 1994, which were later revised. The author discusses the notions of Form and Shape and its possible meanings in English language and in Laban / Bartenieff Movement Analysis System considering it as an independent category of analysis. It discusses consensus and disagreements in the use of this material as well as its symbols or notation signs in different LMA programs. She presents suggestions for notation and to what differences Modes of Shape Change, Shape Qualities, General Shape Flow Baseline and Postural Shape Flow Support based on her teaching experience in LMA programs. She also indicates when to use Shape based analysis. On presenting the background of Shape category in LMA, she makes an invitation to deepen discussion as a mode of developing and changing shapes and wisdoms for a future use.

Keywords

Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analysis System.
Shape. Modes of Shape Change. Shape Qualities.
Notation Symbols.

Resumo

Este artigo resulta de apresentações em conferências na Alemanha e Estados Unidos em 1993 e 1994, revisados posteriormente. Nele, a autora discute a noção de Forma e seus possíveis significados na língua inglesa e suas origens no Sistema de Análise de Movimento Laban/ Bartenieff considerando sua inclusão como categoria de análise independente. Discute consensos e divergências no uso desse material e de suas representações em símbolos de notação nos programas de formação. A partir de sua experiência como docente integrante desses programas, apresenta sugestões para a notação e para o que diferencia Modos de Mudança de Forma, Qualidades de Forma, Base Geral de Forma Fluida e Suporte Postural de Forma Fluida, indicando, também, quando usar uma análise baseada na Forma. Ao apresentar um percurso de discussões, ela conclui com um convite ao aprofundamento dessa reflexão como modo de transição e desenvolvimento de formas e sabedorias para um futuro uso.

Palavras-chave

Sistema de Análise de Movimento Laban/Bartenieff.
Forma. Modos de Mudança de Forma.
Qualidades de Forma. Símbolos de Notação.

Preamble³

Numerous Shape aspects have been clarified in the intervening years, including the symbols for Opening and Closing (∩ ∪) confirmed at the IMS Theory meeting after the Motus Humanus meeting in Salt Lake City in 2000.

And the symbols for Shape Forms (∣ ∟ ⊙ ⊗ ⊠), confirmed at the Motif Conference at Ohio State University in 2001.

SHAPE: What's Shaping Up?

In our world today we hear, a lot about SHAPE "Shape up!" "Get in shape!" "The Shape of Content". "The shape of things to come...". In each of these uses of the word, the speaker assumes that the listener will understand what is meant. This is the value of a common language. However, as we all know, language depends upon having had common experiences in relation to the words, and is also context-specific. The admonishment to "get in Shape!" may lead to a totally different series of actions for an Hawaiian hula dancer, a German Olympic track star, or to a Scottish mother who has just given birth. This seems logical and fine since there is no one theory world wide in which the meaning of being "in Shape" is defined. The area of SHAPE in Laban Movement

1 Peggy Hackney's 1993 paper, "What's Shaping Up" presented at the Eurolab Conference in Berlin and her "Eye-Blink" version presented with Janice Meaden at the LIMS Conference October 23, 1994. Typing of the papers was done [originally] by Jimmyle Listenbee in 2002.

2 Peggy graduated from the very first Effort/Shape Certificate Program in New York City in 1968. Prior to her retirement in 2013, Peggy taught at the University of California at Berkeley for 8 years and the University of Washington for 11 years.

3 Reviewers' note: This information is presented in the most recent version of the article (2002) before its development. The impossibility of inserting footnote symbols for a Portuguese version obliges us to keep this observation as preamble. The symbols for Shape Forms refer to the Pin, Wall, Ball, Screw and Pyramid / Tetrahedron respectively.

Analysis (LMA), particularly the use of such terms as Rising-Sinking, Advancing-Retreating, or Spreading-Enclosing, may also lead to different movement depending upon where you received your LMA Certification. The symbols used for recording may also vary. In my opinion this is not quite so logical or fine, since the concept of Certification implies that LMA has a core Theory which is being taught world wide, and certified people should be able to understand each other. Things get even more complex when we want to communicate, but do not necessarily speak the same native language. The LMA community is broadening around the world and this fact is yet another reason why we, as professionals in this field, need to "Shape up!" We need to get clearer about our theory in terms of delineating what we feel is important in the SHAPE category. We need this clarity in what we perceive, in what we teach, and in how we record in symbols, because symbols will eventually make our system usable across language barriers.

In Laban Movement Analysis we have been dancing around the issue of SHAPE for many years, probably partially confused by:

- the overuse of the term within the English language;
- the confusion between SHAPE as a Still Form (Destination) and SHAPE as a Changing Form (i.e., Motion) ... including both SHAPE as a Trace Form and looking at the Forming Process itself ("Modes of Shape Change" and "Shape Qualities");
- the fact that our system developed within the context of various application areas which do not use the term consistently, or even feel the need to look at the same level of observation.

What do we mean by the term "Shape?"

I will not attempt a thorough historic overview of this area since Vera Maletic has already provided a background article on the early Laban concepts and a few of the later European and American "dialects" (MALETIC, 1988). I would like to quote from

her article, because it is not readily available and it provides a context for our current discussion.

“SHAPE,” according to Webster’s International Dictionary, is the “characteristic appearance of visible form,” or a “spatial form or contour that is usually fixed by a relatively constant spatial relation between the parts of the periphery or surface.” (1970 edition)

These definitions seem to relate to the four shapes of Body Carriage Laban delineated, which we know as PIN, WALL, BALL, and SCREW. These Basic Forms, or Basic Still Shapes, are generally taught in all LMA classes (not only in the area of SHAPE, but also in relation to Body Attitude). They seem to be the simplest aspect of SHAPE to grasp... probably because they do not describe Motion, but instead describe the arrival at or maintenance of a final form, a Destination. However we do not even have symbols for these most basic forms! If we want to use symbols for eliciting movement with Motif writing, in a research score - perhaps for recording Body Attitude, or simply to speak across language barriers, we are at a loss at present. The words themselves are quite valuable for eliciting movement in a creative dance situation, but symbols would be very useful for analyzing complex movement. Frequently forms in everyday life or dance seem to be a combination of two or more shapes, because different areas of the body are engaged in revealing different forms. (For example, a woman sitting with a very vertically erect, Pinlike torso while her legs are twining around each other in a Screw...or a ballerina on point with her legs in fifth position revealing a Pin shape, while her upper body arches up an over the back space as if creating a Ball shape in back of her). The need for symbols to record this complexity is heightened when the phrasing coming into an out of the shapes is overlapping in different body areas and it is important to show timing.

In addition to these Basic Forms, Vera Malefic goes on to clarify the development of Laban’s explorations of SHAPE in terms of Trace Form. She mentions his fascination with the use of Arabic

numerals 1, 2 and 3, and “The fundamental trace-forms: straight - droit; curved, open outwardly or inwardly - ouvert; circular - rond; and wavy - tortille.” (LABAN, 1927, p. 54-55; LABAN, 1966, p. 83; MALETIC, 1988, p. 26). The subject of Trace Forms has been adequately discussed elsewhere both by Maletic and Ann Hutchinson Guest (in her work on “Design Drawing” in *Your Move*). And we have symbolic ways of recording it. I wanted to mention it in this paper, since it is part of the whole area of SHAPE. But it is not a point of contention in LMA at this point, and, therefore, I will not pursue it further.

Let’s look at a slightly broader definition of SHAPE: Ed Groff describes SHAPE as “The physical form made visible by the constellation of body parts and the process of forming and transforming the body shape” (Post-Certification Workshop, 1990). In this statement you will notice he indicates that the FINAL FORM (the basic Shape), the FORM IN PROCESS (Trace Form), and the FORMING PROCESS ITSELF are all parts of the category of SHAPE in the LMA system. It is this last part, our ability to perceive and record THE MOVEMENT PROCESS, that makes us different from other areas such as the Visual Arts, who talk about Shape in terms of static form. It is also this last part where we need to come to more clarity if we are going to be able to use our system internationally and across applications which need descriptive clarity in order to make meaning in a situation.

Making meaning

This brings us to the next point. In the LMA system, we are concerned with making sense of what we perceive, i.e., the ability to make meaning is important to us. Here we enter the realm of content. This realm, and the willingness of LMA to deal in this realm, is probably one of the reasons most of us continue to be interested in this system. And, it is at this point that things become not only more interesting, but also more complex, because we want to have a system that values content and is theoretically clear without prescribing a set interpretation, since interpretation

is context-specific. As we all know, Laban was interested in content from the beginning, and may have been more specific in his interpretation than many of us are willing to embrace today. Other theoreticians also address the issue of shape or form and content.

Again I will quote from Vera Maletic's paper:

Discussing the indiscriminate usage of terms SHAPE and FORM, Rudolf Arnheim maintains that there is a useful difference of meaning between the two terms in that "all shape is the form of some content." (Arnheim, 1965, p. 82) While artist/writer Ben Shawn also believes that "form is the visible shape of the content" (Shawn, 1976, p.61). For Susanne Langer, the creation of forms as symbols of human feelings is the endeavor in all art. (Langer, 1953, p.40). Numerous passages in Laban's first book *Die Welt des Tarsiers* (1920) hint at the form-shape-content connection. He maintains that a form element always corresponds to a particular symbolic or psychological component. For instance the straight line, the wave and the spiral and their combinations always convey different feelings or thoughts. Of course, the interdependence of content and shape/form is in tune with Laban's broad view of mind-body unity also expressed in Laban's first book in statements such as 'there is no emotional arousal or mental effort without body movement and vice versa.' (1920, p.32). We will, however, not find a consistent terminology regarding shape and form in Laban's writing — he not only uses both terms interchangeably, but also applies a whole array of related terms, such as "trace-forms, formal element, path, air and floor patterns." (MALETIC, 1988, p. 24).

I do not feel it is necessary to make a distinction between the words Shape and Form at this point, but we need to deal with an important issue — How do we make meaning out of Shape or Form?

Perhaps with a still-form we indwell or identify with the form bodily, "feeling ourselves into" the form as postulated by the theory of "Empathy" ("Einfühlung") by Theodora Lipps and/or perhaps we sense a kinesthetic identification, correlating the kinesthetic with the visual. This theory is called "Isomorphism" by Wolfgang Kohler and relates to the

sense of Stability/Mobility in terms of dimensional vs. oblique lines or forms. These important theories of perception seem to have been in the cultural milieu when Laban was developing his theories (MALETIC, 1988, p.24-25). Neither of these theories is about the actual process of MOVEMENT itself, the CHANGE PROCESS, the FORMING PROCESS.

In human movement, our perception of the MEANING of form comes in large part from the EXPERIENCE OF THE CHANGING PROCESS WHICH CREATES THE FORM. This implies we need ways to talk about and record this changing process in order to make sense of experience. Process orientation is paramount in the business of Making Sense of the movement of human beings.

Many popularized systems of Body Language interpretation fail to deal with this Process orientation and do not look at the movement into and out of a form. They fall into the mistake of assigning one-to-one meaning to a particular constellation of body parts (shape). (For instance, a picture of a woman sitting with her legs wide open may be interpreted to be "available," whereas one with legs crossed may be seen as "unavailable." This fails to take into account that aspects of *movement* color the meaning, as does the context).

Since the 1950's and Warren Lamb's pioneering work in this area, we have been gaining skills to analyze and record the process of the changing shape. In his development of the Action Profile, Lamb addressed this more Process-oriented side of looking at SHAPE. We need to continue to refine this ability, paying particular attention to differentiating the several "layers" of movement meaning which might be inherent in any process of shape change.

For instance, in terms of the "Modes of Shape Change," when we see the still form mentioned above, we don't know if the woman opened her legs in Shape Flow — simply getting comfortable in her joints — or whether she opened her legs Directionally — perhaps to touch another person's knee.

Additionally, in terms of "Shape Qualities", the woman with her legs open may previously been

even more widely spread. If we observe her in a still pose, we would have no way of knowing whether she spread or enclosed to get to the form she is currently in. We also would not be able to perceive the enlivening aspects of Postural Shape Flow which support and color the shape change. Without the experience of the perception of the movement we know less about the actual *mover's intent* as she arrives at the still form. Perhaps instead we project more of our own intent into the form. This is advertising photography - inviting or enticing the viewer to "in-dwell" the still-form and fill it with personal meaning.

Fortunately, in LMA we can talk about the MOVEMENT as well as the still-form. As mentioned above, I perceive that we have different layers of shape change aspects, which contribute different layers of "content" to the event.

a. Modes of Shape Change

b. Shape Qualities

c. General Shape Flow Baseline and Postural Shape Flow Support

These will be discussed more fully later in this paper.

My own basic thoughts on the area of Shape began to crystallize when I tried to use the Shape concepts (and particularly the Shape symbols) in Dance Style Analysis research on Merce Cunningham in 1968, thereafter in my own teaching, and in many different endeavors including an extensive research project done with Irmgard Bartenieff, Judy Van Zile and Carl Wolz at the University of Hawaii on Mohiniyattam, a dance style from Southwest India. What I discovered in my research was that SHAPE is the least developed aspect of the LMA system. The developments to that point seemed to be sufficient for Warren Lamb's use with Management Assessment in Action Profiling (indeed they were developed there) and in more differentiated form in the psychological and therapeutic work of Dr. Judith Kestenberg (Kestenberg Movement Profiling). But what the Lamb and Kestenberg work had developed in terms of Shape was not sufficient for Dance Style Analysis, or for Dance teaching and the training of artists.

Because of their interpretive frameworks (which I find fascinating, elegant and useful within their contexts), these application areas get the information they need by looking at SHAPE in terms of "compounds" rather than basic "elements." (An example of a "compound" might be the traditional use of the term "Rising" to mean "shape change in the vertical plane done with a shaping". This was the use of the term when I went through the Certification Program in the mid-1960's. The "elements" which made up this "compound" were changes in the shape toward upness in the Vertical dimension and towards sidedness in the Horizontal as well as implication of a voluminous — Carving — Mode of Shape Change.

All of these three "elements" were represented by the ONE symbol . I feel it would be more useful to represent each element separately and combine the three separate symbols to show the constellation .

Basic general proposal

I am in favor of revamping our theory, where necessary, to MAKE THE MOST ELEMENTAL ASPECTS OF MOVEMENT CLEAR AND RECORDABLE IN SYMBOLS. This means that we will have to look at our system and see where we have traditionally lumped elements together to form molecules or compounds and locate what are the "elements" which make up the "compound", then check to make sure we have symbols for each of these elements which can then be joined together to again represent the "compound".

It is my belief that a system needs to be large enough in its theory to contain all possible areas of application of that theory. For a system to be adequate to this job, as well as aesthetically beautiful, it needs to have many different levels of GENERALITY and SPECIFICITY which can be utilized across application areas. In revamping the theory, I do not advocate throwing away what has already been gained in the areas of application which already have developed symbology and interpretive frameworks. But I do not see that the interpretive frameworks and "compounds" need to confine the growth of the theo-

ry. (For instance, Ellen Goldman expressed concern in 1984 that my proposals in regard to changing the symbols “might imply the loss of the developmental aspects of shape-flow — directional — shaping, as they relate to the developing child”. To this concern I would say that the developmental theory is an interpretive framework which I truly value and utilize when the context invites it, but I would not want to have it as an inherent part of every interpretation).

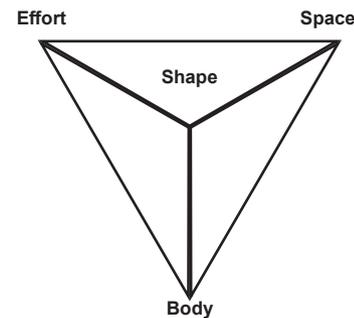
Hopefully, the larger more elemental theory will be able to contain all application areas, and through the use of “Key Signatures”, or agreed upon symbology, we will maintain our connection to our roots while not being stymied by them. At a minimum I would like our theory and symbology in the areas of SHAPE to be able to describe and record everything we feel it is important to teach in the Certification Curriculum. At this point there are still many discrepancies and we are still in need of many symbols.

For the past 25 years I have been encouraging the LMA system to take another look at its theory and make the changes that are necessary to encompass a larger whole in terms of movement training and observation. In 1984 I proposed that we change certain aspects of the system and its symbology (I refer the reader to my 1984 paper for the LMA Conference at Rutgers entitled “*Shape: Clarifications Within the System of Laban Movement Analysis*”, and also to Ellen Goldman’s response to that paper). In the intervening 9 years I have had numerous meetings with LMA Certification faculties in Seattle, New York and Berlin. I gained a lot from discussions at the Post-Certification Workshop in Woodstock, N.Y. in 1990, teaching with Janis Pforsich, Ed Groff and Ellen Goldman. In the last year in Berlin we have had many meetings where we attempted to address concerns from various faculty members (some had been students in New York and some had taught on the New York faculty; others were trained in Seattle). These discussions with Antja Kennedy, Ute Lang, Martha Eddy, Christine Gewalt, Ciel Werts, Sylvia Dietrich, Jeffrey Longstaff, Ed Groff, Janice Meaden and Pam Schick continued to shed light on the area of Shape. I feel grateful

for the discussions and am now writing this paper to confirm where I sense the consensus is at this point.

What do we seem to agree on?

1. I feel we have general consensus that SHAPE belongs as one of the four basic areas of study within the LMA system, i.e., BODY, EFFORT, SPACE, SHAPE. We now frequently use a tetrahedral model to show this.



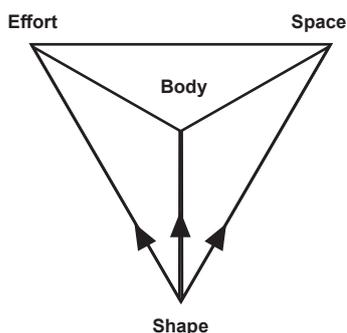
Some people feel that SHAPE is related to SPACE in that the Shape Qualities give information about how the shape is changing in relation to “Where,” i.e., each shape quality represents a shape change toward a dimensional direction — some people still feel the “where” is planal. (Warren Lamb developed the SHAPE side of his Action Profile with Space-Effort affinities as a departure point). You will notice that the definition of Shape quoted from Webster’s International Dictionary (above) uses spatial terminology.

Other people feel that SHAPE is inherently related to EFFORT in that the Modes of Shape Change and Shape Qualities are attitudinal, they are reflective of a change in inner attitude. (The organism from the inside is doing this ...inner motivation).

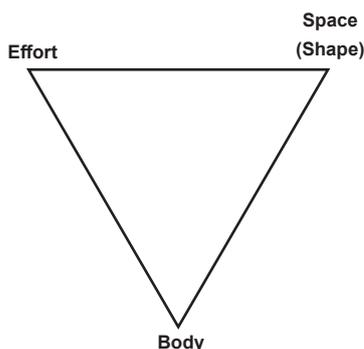
Still other people feel that SHAPE is more related to BODY, since it is constellations of body parts that create a visible form. It is also true that a clear sense of Modes of Shape Change and Shape Qualities (including Postural Shape Flow Support) aid Connectivity and vice versa. Some people also point out that “Concave” and “Convex” are statements about body part relationships as well as about shape. (Warren Lamb used “Concave/Convex” as he formulated his technique for observing

shape change in Action Profiling — he observes change in body part relationships in relation to the planes). You will notice that Ed Groff's definition of Shape uses body terminology, although I do not think that Ed sees Shape as mainly related to BODY.

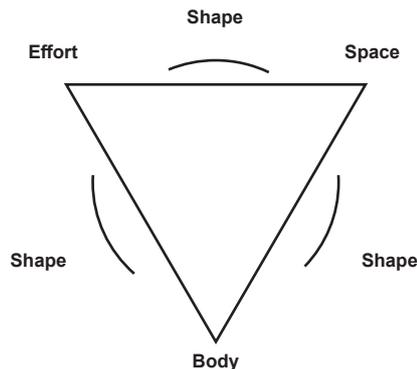
In the tetrahedral model (above) I have put SHAPE in the middle to show the integral relationships just mentioned above. Of course, it could be put in any position, since the tetrahedron can be turned in any direction. For instance, the model below is useful when using SHAPE as an inroad to the other three categories.



When I was in training in 1967, the system spoke about BODY, EFFORT, SPACE and used a triangular model, with SHAPE as a subcategory of SPACE. Even as late as 1980, Irmgard Bartenieff used this model in her book, *Body Movement: Coping With the Environment*.



Janis Pforsich pointed out in the 1990 Post Certification course that some people continue to use the triangular model and consider that SHAPE is “the watershed” between BODY and SPACE, or BODY and EFFORT, or EFFORT and SPACE.



2. Since 1984, I sense that there is widespread agreement that it is useful to have a general symbol to refer to the category of Directional Movement (i.e., both arclike and spokelike movement). This general symbol is $\text{---}\# \curvearrowright$, with the specific symbols being $\text{---}\# \curvearrowright$ and $\text{---}\# \text{---}$. (Prior to that point, it was necessary to specify whether the movement was arclike or spokelike, because the only symbols which existed were $\text{---}\# \curvearrowright$, and $\text{---}\# \text{---}$. This change in symbology is an example of making a change to address the need for both GENERALITY and SPECIFICITY. I am happy that we have this symbol - it has been quite useful to the whole system.

3. I sense that we have general consensus that Shape Flow, Directional and Carving (Shaping) should be called “Modes of Shape Change” and are a different level of observation and give different information than do the “Shape Qualities”. (I am aware that we are not in consensus about the symbol for Shape Flow and/or the symbols for the “Shape Qualities” or the word for “Carving” and I will discuss those later)

4. I sense that we have agreed to continue to use the term “Directional Movement” (rather than switch to “Goal-oriented Shape Change” or “Location-oriented Shape Change”).

5. I sense that most teachers of LMA are using the “Shape Qualities” within, a Dimensional matrix (not a Planal one)...although there may be continued debate about this.

6. I sense that most people within the LMA system are able to differentiate between when it is important to talk about SPACE and when talking about SHAPE

is more appropriate. (For instance, they are able to distinguish between the intent in SPACE to arrive place high  and the intent in SHAPE to  invest in the process of Rising. - Sometimes these two occur simultaneously, but not always). I refer the reader to my 1984 paper for some of the issues in this area, including the related aspect of "Direction of Progression".

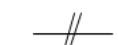
When I look back over this list, I see that we have accomplished quite a few things in terms of developing consistency in the years between 1984 and 1993. We still have a long way to go.

————— What is still not agreed upon?

1. We are still using two different symbols for Shape Flow in the "Modes of Shape Change" category.

In New York, we still use the symbol  (where the shape action stroke does not intersect the line), and in Seattle and Berlin we use the symbol  (where the shape action stroke does intersect the line, as it does in  and ).

I feel we can be more theoretically consistent (as well as aesthetically beautiful) by having all "Modes of Shape Change" at the Expressive Level be equal and recoded in a similar fashion: with the shape action stroke extending through the line.



Shape Flow



Directional



Carving

Related to this...It also feels important to me that no developmental framework for interpretation be implied inherently to these Modes (although I value it in the context of Kestenberg Movement Profiling [KMP]). I realize that KMP places a positive value on Shaping (Carving) and I feel we also stress it in our LMA training programs as a way of encouraging people to develop their full human movement potential. In spite of this, I want the general theory to be free of implied developmental bias. I feel this way because in Dance, Shape Flow and Directional Movement in performance quality and at a choreographic level of

expressive choice are equally as *masterful* as Carving (Shaping). For example, Twyla Tharp doesn't employ Shape Flow in her expressive statement because she *can't* do Carving or because she is in a learning mode or a defending mode. She is using her mastery of movement in service of making an artistic statement, utilizing Shape Flow at the expressive level. The same can be said of Balanchine's use of Directional movement in a masterful way. Dancers train for years to be able to produce complex phrases of the "Modes of Shape Change". For instance, most of the choreographers working in the US and Europe today incorporate all three "Modes" in their pieces. This enables them to make pieces about "Me bridging to the world and interacting with it and being affected by it" ( ).

And in these instances, Shape Flow is equally as important an expressive statement as Directional and Carving.

2. We have not agreed to cease using the word "Shaping" for the voluminous Mode of Shape Change (). I feel the word "Shaping" is a general word, which should be available to the whole process-oriented aspect of the SHAPE category. (i.e., I feel we could use this word as an all-inclusive general word to cover Modes of Shape Change, Shape Qualities and Postural Shape Flow Support - as in "Let's talk about the Shaping aspects in this movement event").

I suggest that we use the word "Carving," or "Molding," or "Contouring" for the voluminous Mode of Shape Change ().

3. We have not adequately distinguished in our symbology between Shape Flow as a baseline which supports all shape change and Shape flow at the Expressive level (i.e., when Shape flow is the major expressive statement, as in the Tharp example above). We have a similar problem with Effort - when flow is there simply because the persona is alive and moving - as opposed to when Flow Effort is there as a major part of the expressive statement (as in Passion Drive ).

I propose that we continue discussion of this point and that in the meantime we use the symbol  (with the shape action stroke not extending through the line) to represent the following:

a) Shape Flow as a Baseline

This is basic breath and cellular movement that is reflective of the fact that we are alive. It might be seen when someone is asleep or is in stillness and there is a slight growing and shrinking in the whole body.

b) Postural Shape Flow Support for all of the “Modes of Shape Change” and “Shape Qualities”

This is an example of (a.), but could also be seen as a more intentional use of Shape Flow as a Baseline. I find myself coaching for this as I teach the Scales in Space Harmony, for instance, “Use your Postural Shape flow Support as you sink, advance and enclose” (). Postural Shape Flow Support seems to be related to Breath Support.

Of course, because each human being has his/her own preferences in terms of breathing and changing the shape of the body towards a spatial direction, it is useful to have the beautiful clarity of the Kestenbergs Bi-polar and Uni-polar Shape Flow to help us distinguish individual preferences in terms of Shape Flow Support. For instance, in the above example of sinking, advancing and enclosing, one person might support that with an emphasis in Shape Flow Support in terms of Bi-polar shortening () - another person might support it with Uni-polar narrowing (). When the system of recording is adequate, we can be as specific or as general as is necessary.

c) The most general “Shape Quality” statement of Opening/Closing or Expanding/Condensing as part of the shape graph.

In this context  would mean “Generic Opening” and  would mean “Generic Closing” - general shape change statements which do not imply a Mode of Shape Change. If wanted, this could be specified (i.e., a “compound” could be made). For instance:



I recognize that this proposed Generic usage is a conflict in terms of use of the symbols (i.e., in a. and b. above the symbols mean Shape flow in this instance, as the most general statement of Shape Qualities they mean Generic Opening/Closing). I suggest that more work needs to be done to sort this out.

4. We have not agreed upon the meaning of the symbols  .

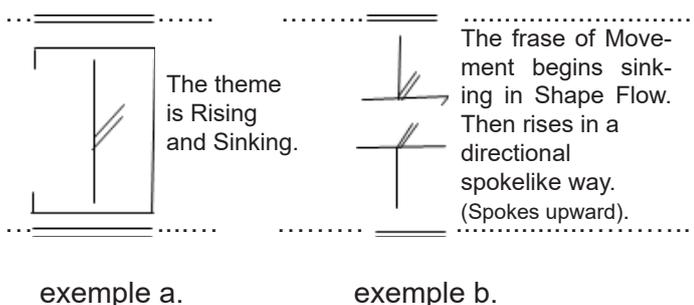
At present New York uses these symbols in a way which includes the “Shaping” (Carving) Mode of Shape Change. In my mind these symbols should be generic elemental symbols (similar to the Effort symbols) and should not represent a “compound” statement. We are teaching this elemental meaning of the symbols in Seattle and in Berlin. As I suggested in 1984, I would like to call these “Shape Qualities” or “Shape Elements”. (For instance, the Shape Quality of Rising  could be done in any Mode of Shape Change. The Shape Quality symbol in itself would not imply the Mode. When it was important to note, that could easily be done.



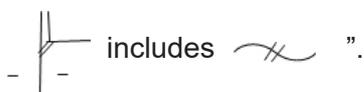
By making a statement that the symbol for Rising would not prescribe a Mode of Shape Change, I am not saying that such an abstraction exists. Of course, *once one moves*, the choice for Shape Flow, Directional or Carving has already been made and it could be recorded - if it were important. This is Descriptive usage. But what I am saying is that it is not always necessary (or *even* desirable) to give that amount of information - particularly in Prescriptive situations. (Naturally, you can’t have a shape change without an effort change either, but we don’t always have to record both. It depends on what is needed in the situation). In some contexts you might

only want to give a more generalized statement so as not to automatically prescribe a specific Mode of Shape Change. Perhaps you want your students to play with the general elements of Rising and Sinking, leaving all three Modes of Shape Change as a possibility. In the current New-York system it would be impossible to make a Motif of this (because each of the shape symbols implies a Mode of Shape Change), whereas in the system I am proposing, such a general Motif would be easy (See example a. below). If I wanted to make it more specific, that would also be easy (See example b. below).

Using LMA in different contexts - Describing and Recording movement versus Eliciting movement - means we need to have many different degrees of GENERALITY and SPECIFICITY available to us.



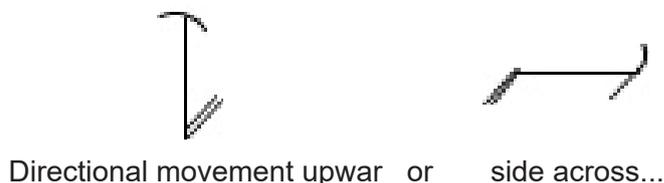
It also seems totally possible to me that a “Key Signature” (as the term is called in Labanotation and in music notation) could be used at the beginning of any Action Profiling or Kesterberg score to say “In this score



In this way those applications which assume volume in terms of “Shaping” with those shape quality symbols could easily continue to use them in that way without inconveniencing other applications in which a more generic use of symbols is more useful.

5. We are not in agreement currently about how we record Directional movement with a particular Shape quality. In Seattle and Berlin we have been using the “elemental” approach described above. (i.e., = enclosing directionally sideways across the body).

The traditional symbols for Directional Movement, the ones with the “flags” (i.e., , etc.) are useful, especially in certain situations (see below). But I would like to agree that we would not have to specify arclike or spokelike if that degree of specificity were not necessary. For instance, the following symbols could represent.

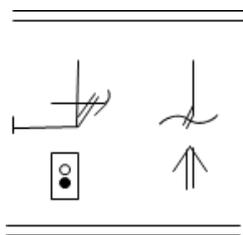


6. I sense we are not in agreement about how to record shape change when a high degree of differentiation is needed and many different aspects are happening at once. In the traditional Kesterberg system, this complexity might be indicated with a symbol such as

In her response to my 1984 paper, Ellen Goldman was concerned that we not lose the ability to deal with complexity. I totally agree with her. I can see that the Kesterberg example, given above, works fine when it doesn’t matter that we be able to locate here in the body the different qualities are occurring. In this example, to make it consistent with the symbology I have proposed I might play with mixing the symbols in this way: adding a “Carving” indication to the symbol for Spreading.



When many aspects are happening at once in the body and it is important to know which body part is doing which action (as it is in Labanotation), the system I have proposed can be extremely specific.



The torso is Rising Directionally with Lengthening Shape Flow Support, while the arms are Spreading in a Carving Mode.

Again this is the beauty of a system which has the ability to deal with different levels of GENERALITY and SPECIFICITY.

7. One other aspect might still need addressing, and that is whether the Shape Qualities are aligned with dimensions or with planes. I recommend that they be aligned with dimensions - in this way each shape quality would represent one aspect of the changing shape in the same way that each effort quality represents one aspect of the changing effort energy. In an All-Certification faculty meeting in 1990 at Hampshire College a large majority of Certification faculty members indicated they are already using these symbols in this way. A couple said they used both dimensional and planal, depending on their own needs.

My feeling is that the theoretical clarity and aesthetic beauty of the system would be served by simplifying. Of course the Action Profilers and Kestenbergs could still continue to record in the usual way with the use of a "Key Signature."

-  = Planal or, to encompass (4.)

-  includes  in Planes.

What is still needed in the shape area?

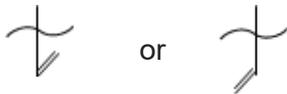
1. We need more discussion and looking at movement together among people who are teaching the material worldwide so that we can come to whatever agreements are possible and move the work ahead. I propose that we convene a worldwide gathering of Certification level teachers of LMA to come to some decisions in the area of SHAPE so that we can be consistent in our LMA Certification programs. It would be wonderful if this could happen through funding by the Theory Network of LIMS, but it needs to happen whether that is possible or not.

2. At present one of the appealing aspects of the New York system of looking at SHAPE is that there are 18 different words which are used - six for each Mode of Shape Change. By the choice of word you use, I know immediately if you are referring to Shape flow, Directional or Carving. For instance, "Shortening" is a Shape flow word; "Downward" is a Directional word; and "Sinking" is a "Shaping" word. If we want to have this kind of specificity in the system, I am proposing we will need to come up with new words to refer to either the Generic Shape Qualities or to the "Carving" (Shaping) qualities. I recommend using the current "Shaping" words for the generic (See attached sheet). Other words which might be considered are Ascending/Descending, Approaching/Receding (or Retiring), and Broadening/Surrounding. (Actually, I feel Widening and Narrowing are the most Generic in this category, but those are currently used with Shape Flow in the Kestenbergs system. I suggest we talk more about this).

3. I still prefer the words "Carving" or "Molding" or "Contouring" to the word "Shaping" for the Mode of Shape Change which is about creating volume.

4. We need to discuss the uses of the symbols currently used by New York for Directional Mode of Shape Change (i.e., , , etc.). I can see that we could agree to continue to use them in certain situations (see examples at the end of this paper), and I would assume that they could be used in a more

Generic way without having to distinguish between arclike and spokelike (for example  or ). If we decided to continue to use these symbols, I would like to see us be able to add a specific indication for “Carving” to the symbols as well. For example:



5. I would like to see us begin work on the “States and Drives” of Shape. (i.e., ways of talking about constellations of two Shape Qualities or three Shape Qualities as we do in the Effort work). I have been giving this some thought and would like to collaborate with others in this area.

6. We need symbols for Pin, Wall, Ball, Screw (and, perhaps, Pyramid).

7. We need symbols for the most general statement of Shape Change - Generic Opening and Closing. The ones we currently use imply Shape Flow. I would like to be able to say “Play with Opening and Closing in all three Modes of Shape Change”.

8. We need symbols for Concave/Convex.

————— When is it important to talk about shape?

Sometimes people ask me “When do you use SHAPE as opposed to the other areas of LMA?”

I generally choose to describe movement in terms of SHAPE when...

A. I see a relatively fixed form (such as a Ball shape) in either a Body Attitude or a momentary still-form; or I see a mover who seems to be moving to reveal a series of still-forms or is “making shapes”; or if the mover seems “shape-oriented.” I might describe those shapes with the terms that Laban used for the four shapes of Body Carriage, basic still forms or shapes: Pin. Wall. Ball. Screw. (Some people are interested in adding Pyramid to this list of Basic Forms, since human beings frequently sit in a tetrahedral form when in conversation. Others feel that this tetrahedral form is actually a form of the Ball shape or a subtle Screw).

B. I am left with a Trace-Form indelibly implanted in my mind’s eye after seeing a movement, or when I hear an intention stated in terms of shape (“Draw a Heart-shape in the air”). In these cases I might record the relatively fixed form of the Trace-Form with a Design Drawing.

C. I notice the Form Changing in a Process which is creating a new form. I might describe this in terms of “Shape Qualities”. This feels different to me from sensing the connections within the body parts (which I might choose to describe in terms of Body), feeling the dynamic vitality (which I might choose to describe in terms of Effort), or perceiving energy lines in space, creating crystalline connections in the environment (which I might choose to describe in terms of Space).

D. I feel the overall expressive statement is about creating the relationship of Self-to-Self or Self-to-Environment through the changing form of the body. In this instance I would use “Modes of Shape Change” for the description.

E. I sense that the major movement going on is breath related. In this instance I would probably describe the Shape Flow Baseline/Postural Shape Flow Support.

————— Conclusion

Hopefully this paper has illuminated a bit of background of the SHAPE category of LMA, where we are now in terms of our theory, and what aspects still need work. Of course we have barely touched the area of “content” and how SHAPE integrates with the other areas of LMA to bring meaning in movement. I have often wondered why the domain of SHAPE is less clarified than other aspects of the LMA system. My sense is that for some reason this arena remains at the edge of our collective consciousness, being the area where the ineffable comes into form. Perhaps the basic nature of SHAPE touches something archetypal which we prefer to allow to remain intuitive rather than shed light on it. The “Shape

Changers” of old were Shamans and Wise Women. I have a hunch that even as we become clearer, we need not fear that we will reach the depths of the mystery. I’m sure there are still enough layers to keep us going for years. And we can grow old and wise doing it. What is the shape of things to come in SHAPE? I don’t know. We are all part of that future.

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Appendix⁴

A few of the basic issues which need addressing:

1. We need to be able to record any movement in terms of SHAPE.

- Because all human movement is constantly changing shape, we need a thorough system for perceiving and recording this aspect. I have a hunch that we frequently do not even see meaningful moments in shape change (particularly in subtle shadow movement) because we do not have a clarified way to record the multiple layers which are contributing to what we are “getting” from the movement. It is easier to switch areas, perhaps to Effort, if that seems predominant, and say perhaps, “I see Mobile State”. However, even if SHAPE is not the major aspect of the movement, I feel we should have the capability of recording what is going on in SHAPE.

- Every major concept or aspect we teach needs a symbol. This is important for research and also for international communication.

- Using Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) in different contexts means we need to have many different degrees of GENERALITY and SPECIFICITY for use in various application areas. For example, when *eliciting movement* in teaching we may need to record motifs which set very general themes; whereas when *recording movement which already exists* (i.e., different ethnic dance forms) we need high degrees of specificity to record subtle differences.

⁴ “Eye-blink” Version of Peggy Hackney’s Perspectives on Shape LIMS Conference, October 23, 1994.

2. We need to distinguish different usage of the term SHAPE FLOW. I recommend two slightly different symbols.



- Shape Flow as the **major expressive statement** which is coloring the communications or relationship. One frequently hears this in a statement such as, “That choreographer’s style is organized around Shape Flow “.

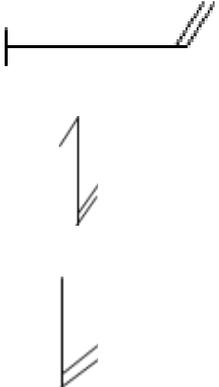
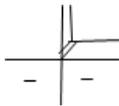
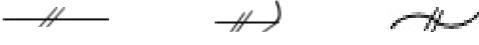
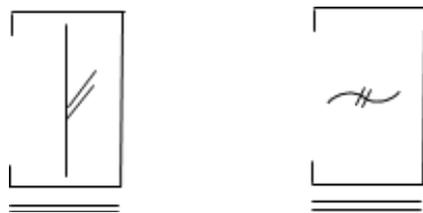
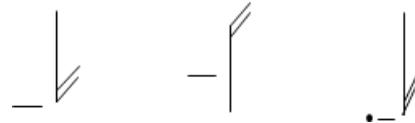


- Shape Flow as an **underlying baseline**, sometimes referred to as “**Shape Flow Support**”. One frequently hears this in statements such as “Let your Shape Flow support you as you carve through that volute”. When the context demands subtle specificity, as in recording the differences in Shape Flow Support between two movers doing the same volute, or similar folk dances from different nearby villages, or two babies lying in their crib, this can be done using Kestenberg’s useful symbols, e.g.



- Shape Flow as the growing and shrinking of kinesphere (there as traditionally been a tendency to play SHAPE within the SPACE category. This is an example).

3. We need to decide whether the SHAPE QUALITY symbols record a Compound or an Element. I favor the Elemental.

COMPOUND	ELEMENT
<p>a. Mode of Shape Change is contained within the Shape Quality Symbol. It is impossible to record where the shape is changing toward without simultaneously deciding and recording what the Mode of Shape Change is. In all symbols below shape change in vertical is implied.</p>  <p>also includes Shape Flow.</p> <p>also includes Directional.</p> <p>Also includes Shaping (Carving).</p> <p>b. Shape Quality Symbol relates to planar organization. Each Shape Quality Symbol represents two aspects of the changing form. In this approach it is not possible to know from the symbol what the secondary tendency is. For instance, does not tell us whether the change includes high or low. In some applications this is not important. In others it is.</p> <p>c. Interpretation inherent, especially in relationship to Modes of Shape Change – i.e., Developmental interpretive framework as used by Kestenberg.</p>	<p>a. Mode of Shape Change is not contained within the Shape Quality symbols, i.e., Generic use of these symbols:</p>  <p>Another set of symbols indicates the Mode of Shape Change:</p>  <p>The two sets of symbols can be combined to specify a compound.</p>  <p>Using this “elemental” approach, a teacher or observer can set Shape themes and leave the Mode up to the mover, or record the Mode and leave the specific Shape Quality up to the mover.</p>  <p>b. Shape Quality symbols relate to a dimensional organization. Each Shape quality symbol represents one aspect of the changing form. Compounds indicate their component elements. Emphasis can also be indicated when needed.</p>  <p>c. Interpretation made according to context.</p>