

Pre Conference Workshop Reflections

Dynamic Phrasing in Dance/Movement Therapy, and Building Observation Skills for Client – presented by Peggy Hackney



Reconnecting with Peggy

It was a delight for me to reconnect with ‘my’ teacher Peggy Hackney after 22 years!! Back in 1983 to 1985 in Seattle, Washington, I studied with Peggy (and Pam Shick, Janice Meaden, Ed Groff and others) in order to obtain my Certification as a Laban Movement Analyst. After more than two decades, I felt an interesting sort of comfort in knowing that Peggy and her gang still worked together, training CMA’s-to-be. I also felt that same sort of ‘comfort’ as I participated in Peggy’s workshops at the recent DTAA conference. I thought to myself, ah, she hasn’t changed – she is still larger than life (being very tiny in actual size), very articulate in her movement and words, and engaging and excited about sharing her love and knowledge of Laban Movement Analysis/Bartenieff Fundamentals (LMA/BF).

The Thursday workshop was on Phrasing. Usually this is taught after students are comfortable and conversant in the LMA/BF vocabulary. However, DTAA had chosen this workshop from the list of Peggy’s possibilities – and Peggy rose to the challenge. She started us out with the simple identification of what she called “stillness and stir”, challenging us to truly listen to, feel and observe our patterns of movement and stillness. I believe most people found this harder than first imagined. The Laban approach demands an exquisite and exacting self-awareness, which requires discipline and practice. We attempted to recognize patterns of

movement (of any combination of body, shape, space or effort) and how they were related to patterns of thought – realizing that both had more clear beginnings, middles and ends than we might have ever noticed before.

Peggy then led us to play with placing the emPHAsis (heheheee) on different parts of the phrase – and invited us to see what these different phrasing styles offered us. Of interest to me, given my passion for Affect Theory, was her comment that “Phrasing was the modulator and regulator of Affect”. Just that thought gives me a lot to chew on for the next 22 years!!!

The second workshop led by Peggy was on Observation – learning to really see Effort, Shape, Space and Body. For each of these LMA elements she offered us experiences and questions to assist us in feeling/seeing them. The group seemed to really respond to the Shape experience, which Peggy called “Calling Down the Sepapu” (forgive my spelling). Shape is very much about breath, so this experiential used sound vibration as a sort of ‘pre-breath’ which provided an organic way of getting into our breath and the shape/forms that emerged from that organic place.

In working with the Body (Bartenieff Fundamentals) Peggy allowed herself to express the only bit of ‘judgement’ regarding movement training I heard in her workshops. She despaired

that, in her experience of teaching LMA/BF to DMTs, she found that many did not have sufficient body level connections and were missing a number of developmental connections. She felt this hindered one's ability to be able to truly observe movement, and be in the body. She expressed her requirement that DMT's learn BF prior to any other LMA training or observation. I have to admit that after teaching LMA/BF at the Wesley Institute over the past 14 years, I had come to exactly the same conclusion and requirement.

Peggy also defined three modes of observation – distant, participatory, and witnessing. These all hold much meaning for us as Dance Therapists, and are interesting to recognize and play with. This workshop, just as in the previous day, provided a way of organizing an element key to my work as a Dance Therapist and Psychotherapist. I personally hope that it is not another 22 years before I (and us all) experience Peggy's clear teaching and understanding of the LMA/BF system.

Sandra Lauffenburger

See *Australian Moves for bio-* p. 57.

Reflections on Peggy Hackney's Conference Offerings



Having studied the Laban/Bartenieff work extensively in the 80s I was thrilled to have the opportunity at the recent DTAA conference to study for two days with Peggy Hackney in her pre conference workshop. Peggy clearly has immersed herself in this work for decades and her depth of knowledge, passion for the work and her own embodiment offered a rich experience. I appreciated the experiential nature of the workshop and the opportunities to engage in personal observation, distant observation as well as participatory observation.

The first day covered dynamic phrasing where we observed ours as well as others' movement

signature. Peggy suggested we notice what quality was speaking most loudly in addition to how we/they interacted. We began with a stillness and stir process to observe in our own movement what happened for us. We then discussed the basics of phrasing including body pattern, shape change, spatial change. She described phrasing as "1, composing one unit of thought or one recognizable unit of expression, and 2, It has a through line." Next, in pairs one person moved while the other drew a line and space for movement phrase and stillness. After moving the mover then drew their own pattern and then compared hers with that of the observer.

Then she went over emphasis in phrasing, which includes non emphatic as well as emphatic phrasing. Emphasis in phrasing can be in the beginning, middle or end or even throughout. Emphasis creates the quality of a movement phrase. For instance even emphasis creates a quality of predictability. We explored this aspect of phrasing after lunch. We gathered in small groups and we created a group dance following a phrasing chart offered by Peggy. Each group showed their dance several times while the observers, in the distant observer role wrote down the phrasing emphasis they noted. We then discussed whether a phrase was loaded or more subtle: by which Peggy meant were there a lot of effort qualities used, such as a state or drive, or was it more subtle than that.

In answer to some queries about the difficulties of identifying movements in ongoing phrases, Peggy reassured us by telling us that Irmgard (Bartenieff) always said - not to worry about missing something because patterns will always be repeated.

One of my favourite activities Peggy offered was a phrase created from various components of the fundamentals. After practicing this phrase we worked with partners to assist in the challenging aspect of the phrase for that person. She suggested that when we re-patterned we must look at the whole phrase and not just change one part. She underlined that the fundamentals are developmentally based so that if one is challenged at a certain level then returning to the level that precedes it, is important to support this next level.

The second day focused on observation. She first described the three levels where we engage. We can observe ourself, we can observe others at a distance or we can observe as a participant where the interaction influences. We looked at the various components of the system including shape, space, effort and body. Peggy offered an

excellent review of all these components including as we moved our observer calling out what she saw. Some poignant questions she offered in our exploration included:

“Am I really inhabiting my form change?” (shape flow)

“Where in the body is movement initiating?”(body connectivity)

“What parts of the body are most active or is it the whole?”

“What pattern of total body connectivity is organizing the movement?”

“Is any part of the body held, not participating?”

“What mode of shape change is being used?”

“Is there shape flow support?”

“What is the juice (effort) of a mover’s signature?”



Peggy in action with the conference group

These questions were guideposts throughout the day. She also suggested as we engage with others

we sometimes offer a contrast or sometimes we match their movement, observing what is easy for the person to go into and what would be a challenge. She encouraged us to offer playful possibilities in the work as often that is freeing.

One experiential that moved me deeply was first witnessing a partner in moving and then joining with the idea of offering a change. I was able to integrate information from working with this person and listening to her desires the day before and support her to manifest this through her dancing. This gave me a sense of knowing on a deep level that yes indeed I am a dance therapist. An ownership that Peggy encouraged throughout the workshop, owning our movement qualities and owning what we observe.

We spent the end of the day exploring states and drives and learning to observe these which I found challenging and this review was particularly helpful..

I deeply appreciated Peggy’s embodiment and her joy for teaching the material and I was deeply grateful to participate with other wise embodied dance/movement therapists!

E. Connor Kelly, MA, ADTR, LPC

Author’s bio – see p’s 29 and 53.

Photographs: The dynamic photos of Peggy observing movement and ‘limbering up’, on p. 38 and 39, are printed with her kind permission. For more about Peggy see her website: www.movingoncenter.org

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