

**Interviewer:**  
**What is LMA?**

JK: Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) originated in the work of Rudolf Laban, and has evolved into a highly detailed practical system that describes qualitative aspects of nonverbal behavior. In its current development, it operates as a phenomenology of movement and mind, as it requires that the observer look at the movement itself, prior to interpretation and without prejudice, while acknowledging the intrinsic connection between movement and subjective experience. Movement Analysis increases kinesthetic sensitivity for the observer, because it places in the foreground of the observer's experience, those aspects of movement which are individual-specific: that is, those movement choices which an individual makes within a particular context. Movement Analysis as a system of observation assumes that a significant degree of individual freedom in movement quality is always present within biological, cultural, and contextually defined bodily repertoires.

**What are the benefits of studying movement analysis?**

JK: Within my own professional and personal experience, awareness of movement through LMA creates an on-going recognition and appreciation of the nonverbal, corporeal aspects of my conscious life. The real appreciation I have for movement analysis and its methodology, comes from the level of kinesthetic participation it engenders between myself and the world I move in. In other words, movement analysis is not a one-way system where the movement analyst simply observes others' movement. Attuning kinesthetically to whomever you are observing, engages you in a kinetic exchange or recognition that you are also changed by as an observer. While you do not have to do the same movement as your subject, you are, by consciously engaging in movement analysis, drawn perceptually into your subject's movement life. This level of 'seeing' another person can in fact feel quite intimate, and in that way requires the respect appropriate for seeing another so closely.

To train in movement analysis requires that you are able yourself to experience the range of movement descriptions that are used as descriptors within the system. Laban believed that one could not understand movement quality sufficiently to analyse it, except through experiencing it oneself. The training, therefore, includes hours and hours of exploration and practice in movement quality that may be very different from one's own general repertoire (a full Certification program generally requires 500-540 hours of learning in a group format). This also gives participants a much greater tolerance and appreciation for difference between people, as well as things, and deepens one's knowledge of those differences on a kinesthetic level. Additionally, working within movement analysis over a long period, fosters not only appreciation for others' movement lives, but also greater respect and appreciation for one's own.

**How does movement analysis differ for dancers, or for other specialists such as verbal therapists, and other non-dancers?**

JK: For dancers, working with movement analysis helps them to understand and perceive movement characteristics more clearly. It gives them a broader base for creating movement vocabulary; and allows for greater conscious choice in the way movement is performed. It also provides a coherent language for describing movement to other dancers, creates a spectrum of movement experience to foster and draw from as a teacher, and allows for more efficient use of movement quality or technique overall.

While LMA is utilised to a greater extent in the fields of dance, theatre, and dance therapy, its descriptive basis is drawn from everyday movement, and its benefits therefore apply in the same way to non-dancers as they do to those who work with these elements professionally. We are all engaged in movement to various degrees of conscious awareness, and bringing bodily experience into the foreground of consciousness also increases range of expressive repertoire, sensitivity to others, more movement efficiency, and depth of physical presence and experience in everyday life. These are benefits that everyone can experience equally.

For those who work in verbal therapeutic settings, study in movement analysis brings the physical dimension of the relationship and the nonverbal aspect of the therapeutic work into closer focus. This creates greater opportunity for effective intervention, by working with the patient's rhythm, timing, or postural changes; and for attending to patterns of movement quality and movement exchange between them. This requires that the therapist also be bodily present for the client, which then enriches possibilities for meaningful therapeutic rapport and understanding.

In Dance Movement Therapy, LMA provides the therapist with tangible tools for relating to, understanding, and also interpreting the movement events that occur in their sessions. It provides an excellent means of assessing changes in the client's subjective experience – as the movement is understood to reflect psychic processes – as well as providing categories for documenting behavioral change expressed through movement.

In all of these areas of work, movement analysis allows for systematic coding of movement events, which is an invaluable tool for research study, or for assessing projects or approaches which involve movement. While the classifications in the system prescribe what to look for, the system itself does not determine the significance of what is seen. This is what makes its use so multi-faceted. Its first application is observing and experiencing movement quality, and the meaning of what is seen or experienced is determined secondarily by context, and purpose.

### **Can Movement Analysis be taught in schools?**

JK: Movement Analysis can be taught to varying degrees of depth; even on a relatively basic level it can add significant creative possibility to dance curricula in schools, and for teachers bridging the arts with other school subjects. Wherever movement can add a dimension of understanding, elements of LMA can be extremely useful for supporting embodied learning in any teaching/learning environment. LMA also can provide teachers with enough creative and expressive explorations to interest and stimulate students for many years. Laban's work in England had its widest application in the provision of dance education in schools, and is still utilised as a primary guide for dance in primary and secondary education in the UK. It has also had quite a lot of success in the teaching of actors and in actor training—both in England and in the US.

### **Are there differences in teaching LMA in different cultural environments?**

JK: Yes! I have noticed very important differences teaching LMA in America, Canada, England, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, France, Croatia, eastern Europe, India....to name a few places I have presented LMA to different groups of people with varied backgrounds in movement. The differences themselves are exciting, providing new possibilities for movement exploration in each new venue, and with each new group of movers. Even with those differences, however, attention to and interest in a bodily experience has become a central interest for many people in countries throughout the world. Students of LMA in each of these different cultures have expressed a hunger

for deeper physical differentiation and understanding. And above all, this is what the study of LMA provides: a rich experience of plumbing the depths of our bodily experiences in the world.