

## Notation and Creative Practice: Introduction to the Special Issue

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In this Special Issue, authors present studies and essays that use variations on the Triple Code Image Somatic response Meaning Model using dance notation to create new knowledge and understanding. János Fügedi uses notation in unconventional ways to transform habits and extend traditional practices in Hungarian traditional dance. Laban Bartenieff Movement Analyst Nicole Perry engages in score writing in ways that have not been Motif notated or discussed before during Intimacy Choreography and Direction. Movement analysts Nicole Harbonnier, Geneviève Dussault, and Catherine Ferri, trained in two movement analysis systems, integrate two analysis approaches to find the power in dual-research models while exploring ground, space, and dynamics. Mara Pegeen Frazier assesses the scope of creativity that dance notation literacy provides—a desire to communicate, develop better tools, and understand culture.

**Keywords:** dance notation | motif notation | labanotation | movement observation-analysis | creative practice | intimacy direction | laban movement analysis | Hungarian traditional dance

### **Article:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**



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## Notation and Creative Practice: Introduction to the Special Issue

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In this Special Issue, authors present studies and essays that use variations on the Triple Code Image Somatic response Meaning Model using dance notation to create new knowledge and understanding. János Fügedi uses notation in unconventional ways to transform habits and extend traditional practices in Hungarian traditional dance. Laban Bartenieff Movement Analyst Nicole Perry engages in score writing in ways that have not been Motif notated or discussed before during Intimacy Choreography and Direction. Movement analysts Nicole Harbonnier, Geneviève Dussault, and Catherine Ferri, trained in two movement analysis systems, integrate two analysis approaches to find the power in dual-research models while exploring ground, space, and dynamics. Mara Pegeen Frazier assesses the scope of creativity that dance notation literacy provides—a desire to communicate, develop better tools, and understand culture.

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**Editor-in-Chief:** Teresa Heiland

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## Introduction

Creativity involves curiosity and the act of idea generation, incubation, illumination, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and the will to produce and share with others. I selected “Notation and Creative Practice” for this special issue because exploring with notation always seems creative for me. I think many people outside of the immediate circle of notation cognoscenti may not be aware of the varied and divergent paths that notation invites us to take, how somatically embodied the experiences can be, and how communicative the experiences can be. When we use notation, it integrates theory and practice, resulting in a living synthesis that refines one’s theories as they are enacted in the actual world through creative praxis. Notation takes many strategic roles in the creative process and yields unique and often surprising products. Forms of dance notation and movement analysis can promote movement exploration resulting in a myriad of fruitful outcomes. At the root of the curiosity is a somatic response to an image that results in meaning making. I chose the articles for this special issue because the authors are grappling with creative callings based on somatic responses and meaning making linked to recording data in or from notation.

When dancers interact with notation symbols, psychologist Akhter Ahsen (1984) would explain that the dancer is experiencing a relationship between the visual image or symbol, the bodily response, and meaning formation. He calls this the Triple Code Model or ISM, consisting of (I) Image, (S) Somatic Response, and (M) Meaning (1984). This model was first used to justify coaching sports for improved performance outcomes but has since been used to describe many responses to types of images, even how meaning occurs when people read poetry. An IMS experience occurs when an image/symbol is first seen, meaning is given, and a bodily response is felt. Any of the six three-letter re-orderings can be used to describe the event (ISM, IMS, SIM, SMI, MIS, MSI). The ISM experience can be cyclic with different starting and ending points, just as creativity starts and ends from different points of inspiration. For example, a researcher could start exploring with notation using the ISM order of Imagery, Somatic Response, Meaning by examining the Image/symbols, engage in the Somatic experience, and record the Meaning. Another approach would be to create choreography Somatically first, understand the Meaning second, and record the Images/Symbols last. While this model represents three disparate categories, in reality, they may be co-occurring. Still, the researcher has to decide which one to place attention on while recording notes on paper. The activity can be reordered depending on the needs of the specific research project. In research that involves sensation, meaning, and written documentation in notation or movement analysis, the Triple Code Model requires that dance experiences discussed be navigated and organized. The Language of Dance Literacy Processes reveal that seven different processes could happen at any

moment: Sensing, Observing, Reflecting, Identifying, Interpreting, Notating, and Creating (Heiland forthcoming). Hence, the process is well-managed and the results well-organized.

In this Special Issue, authors present studies and essays that use variations on this ISM Model using dance notation to create new knowledge and understanding. János Fügedi uses notation in unconventional ways to transform habits and extend traditional practices. Laban Bartenieff Movement Analyst Nicole Perry engages in score writing in ways that have not been Motif notated or discussed before. Movement analysts Nicole Harbonnier, Geneviève Dussault, and Catherine Ferri, trained in two movement analysis systems, integrate two approaches to find the power in dual-research models while exploring ground, space, and dynamics. Mara Pegeen Frazier assesses the scope of the creativity that dance notation literacy has provided—a desire to communicate, develop better tools, and understand culture.

The first article by János Fügedi explores content analysis in Hungarian traditional dance using short Kinetography scores. He uses notation to transform habitual practices in understanding traditional dance to inspire creativity among traditional dancers. Mastering and performing traditional dance forms typically entails preserving established spatial–rhythmical patterns without assuming the liberties of changing any patterns or steps. Fügedi has mastered the analysis of Hungarian traditional dance forms using dance notation. In the following paper, he takes on the challenge of using dance notation to capture underlying improvisational structures used in Hungarian traditional dance. Fügedi introduces these improvisational approaches based on the analysis of spatial changes in dance to interpret content at an abstract level to discover these underlying movement concepts in “Motif Creation Based on Movement Content: A Proposal for Developing Traditional Dance Education.” The content is found via the analysis of several *legényes* motifs by original Hungarian dancers. These realized concepts are used as foundations for contemporary dancers to create new patterns that can represent all of the hidden features of traditional dancing and reflect the individual creativity required of Hungarian traditional dance. The results suggest a direction of progression in which movement analysis, content interpretation, and inscription with dance notation provide a new sensibility in dance that supports creativity among Hungarian traditional dancers, thus revitalizing the positive, competitive nature among traditional dancers.

The article by Nicole Perry reveals how she uses LBMA Motif Notation to engage choreographic reflection and inquiry during the creative process and how she creates scores to direct movement direction in the future. Perry works in a relatively new discipline. As an intimacy director/choreographer, Perry directs/choreographs intimacy scenes in dramatic plays that require movement expertise related to the subtle use of the body while acting to explore and reveal

intimacy between individuals. The purpose of intimacy choreography is to create works that honor the performers' agency and boundaries while delivering the play's tale, musical, ballet, cinema, or another medium. Intimacy can be characterized as situations in which individuals must show personal vulnerability, frequently requiring physical contact. Perry Motif notates this work using LBMA Motif Notation to clarify her purpose and share how the subtle embodiment of intimacy sometimes occurs with small movements, breath, changes in shape, subtle shifts in relationship, and so forth over time. Not only is intimacy direction/choreography an emerging discipline, but notating it using LBMA has not been done before. Perry provides us with scores from a recent production to see her process as she develops her intimacy direction staging and scoring practice. Nicole Perry's paper, titled, "Motif Writing for Meaning-Making and Show Maintenance in Intimacy Choreography," explores how an intimacy director/choreographer's creative process with choreographing and staging moments of intimacy in a play can be set, documented, and analyzed by the choreographer or others for future analysis and creative process. Developing these scores allows the choreographer to have clarity and simultaneously provides a tool to make the intimacy choreographer's process repeatable by the choreographer or anyone who reads notation.

The following study explores how combined analysis methods create new integrated research methods that lead to new ways of understanding movement. In this paper titled, "Movement Observation-Analysis (MOA): How a new conceptual framework supports a better understanding of the coherence of the functional and expressive dimensions of movement," Nicole Harbonnier, Geneviève Dussault, and Catherine Ferri bring together two approaches to qualitative movement analysis used in dance: Laban Bartenieff Movement Analysis (LBMA) and Functional Analysis of the Dancing Body [*L'Analyse Fonctionnelle du Corps dans le Mouvement Dansé*] (AFCMD) to better represent the interplay between the functional and expressive dimensions of movement. The methodology designed for this research combines a phenomenological perspective with *explicitation interviews* of experts followed by an "activity analysis." These efforts led to two types of results: (1) an understanding of the processes underlying the observation-analysis activity of the observers and (2) a proposed crosscutting conceptual framework integrating the central precepts of the two approaches considered. The "Activity Analysis" epistemology allowed the researchers to identify a distinctive configuration of activities specific to each approach. In addition, the new framework graphs the identified observables in three overlapping spheres—Ground, Space, and Dynamics—placing at the heart of the schema the integration of the dimensions of Function and Expression.

Mara Pegeen Frazier looks broadly and historically at how creativity with Labanotation creates new knowledge and understanding. Labanotation is often perceived as a more quantitative form of movement description compared to Motif

Notation. Scholarship to date has more commonly discussed the creativity of Motif Notation and the precision of Labanotation. Because Motif Notation is recognized as the creative movement language most used among dance educators, scholars often fail to recognize the creative potential in the system of Labanotation. Creativity is often thought to be exclusively a mental process, but creativity is as much cultural and social as a psychological event. Frazier looks at the use of Labanotation from the viewpoint of Mihali Csikszentmihalyi's "systems model of creativity." The triad of his creativity includes the culture of dance (Domain: knowledge, values, tools, practices), the personal background (Individual: experience, talents, genetic makeup), and the society (Field: social system, a community of practice). The domain and individual "transmit" information. The domain and field "select" novelty. The field and individual "stimulate" and "produces" novelty (1988, p. 315). Because Labanotation is a tool, Frazier acknowledges that the way it is explored in the community of practice will determine how this tool ends up being utilized in creative practice—as a quantitative, qualitative, divergent, convergent, or playful endeavor. The tool does not predict the creative outcome, but the community of practice and individual experiences do. Frazier's article, "Labanotation is Creative: How a Systems Perspective Reveals Generativity in Dance Notation and its Archives," presents a historical and qualitative analysis of present-day creative notation work through examples drawn from an archival collection of Labanotation materials revealing various ways that Labanotation promotes and demonstrates human creativity. Recognition of the creativity of notators, notation technologists, and stagers can benefit the field if they are recognized and articulated.

The way we read notation generates unique somatic and kinesthetic responses. The practice of sharing and teaching notation provides various ways to cultivate agency, creativity, and expression. Though maybe not often perceived so, notation has a sort of hybridity and collaborative nature to it. Notation promotes critical thinking skills—reflection, analysis, comprehension, and learning transfer are evident across these articles.

While one primary purpose of notation is to record movement or provide a way to read, interpret, and re-explore movement from a score, these articles reveal another goal. Notation is a tool that generates ways of moving and provides inspiration for unique ways of devising new ways of knowing, expressing, and discussing movement. The *cyclic* process of ISMR suggests that we can explore and enter into relationships with notation from different inroads, thus resulting in divergent outcomes that focus human inspirations. Each of these authors gained their knowledge from an understanding of notation. Going through this ISMR process informed their own way that notation can be used to imagine and achieve their process and understanding. I hope that these articles will inspire readers so they will generate their own *responses* from the images, somatic concepts, and

meaning making found here and become moved to share their creative practices using notation to support awareness of how notation can support innovative approaches in the dance field.

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