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**MOVEMENT AND CREATIVITY**

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## **Dedication**

*To my thesis advisor, the lovely Petra Oswaldová, who was always  
a ray of sunshine and encouragement during class.*

*And to all my teachers at the department, as well as other theatre  
practitioners and pedagogues, whom I've had the luck to  
encounter and learn from – this work is the work of everyone.*

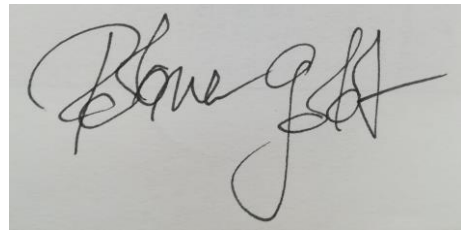
## **D e c l a r a t i o n**

I declare that I have prepared my Master's Thesis independently on the following topic:

**Movement and Creativity**

under the expert guidance of my thesis advisor and with the use of the cited literature and sources.

Prague, date: 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2018

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light gray background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Blou JSA'.

Signature of the candidate

## **WARNING**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The topic of this master thesis is to explore the methods and principles of movement education at the Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy (KATaP). The Authorial Acting program in English started in 2015. Throughout the span of two years, movement classes are taught by three professors. All of them have different approaches, yet they strive towards the same goal – that students gain a higher awareness of their body and can attain better control over their everyday movement habits as well as their movement on stage. Though the study program is designed as a mirror of the Czech program, changes were made due to the different cultures, temperament and skills of the English program students. This represents a great opportunity to revise how movement is being taught at the department.

The body of this thesis is divided into three major chapters dealing with: posture, space and imagination. Each chapter includes a description of exercises that we did in KATaP movement classes related to a specific topic. Sources for the exercise descriptions as well as my reflection on how I felt and what changes I experienced during and after the exercise are taken from my class notes and semester reflections. At the same time, each topic is explored through published theory to give the movement classes a theoretical perspective. The last chapter is devoted to exploring the connection between imagination and movement and how this affects an actor's creativity.

The main motivation for writing this thesis is my appreciation for the transformation my body has undergone during my studies at KATaP. That is why I believe that many can benefit from its content be it theoreticians, teachers or other practitioners in the world of performing arts as well as people who are simply interested in learning something new about their bodies.

**Keywords:** movement education, movement, posture, space, imagination, creativity, movement theory, training for actors, stage movement.

## **ABSTRAKT**

Tématem této magisterské práce je průzkum metod a principů pohybové výchovy, která je vyučována na Katedře Autorské tvorby a Pedagogiky (KATaP). Magisterské studium Herectví se zaměřením na autorskou tvorbu a pedagogiku začalo být vyučováno na DAMU v roce 2015. V průběhu dvou let jsou pohybové kurzy vyučovány třemi profesory. Všichni tři mají odlišné pojetí výuky, avšak usilují o společný cíl – aby studenti získali větší povědomí o svém těle a dosáhli lepší kontroly nad každodenními pohybovými návyky, stejně tak i o pohybu na jevišti. Přestože je program navržen jako obdoba česky vyučovaného programu, různorodost kultury a temperamentu studentů přispěla k určitým obměnám, což představuje velkou příležitost, jakým směrem se obor na katedře vyvíjí.

Diplomová práce je rozdělena do tří hlavních kapitol, které se zabývají: držením těla, prostorem a představivostí. Každá kapitola zahrnuje popis cvičení, jež bylo součástí kurzu pohybu na KATaPu a které se vztahuje k danému tématu. Zdrojem popisu cvičení, stejně tak úvah a změn, které jsem pociťovala v průběhu a po cvičení, jsou převzaty z mých poznámek a ze semestrálních poznatků. Každá kapitola je podložena publikovanou teorií, jež dodává pohybovým kurzům teoretický základ. Poslední kapitola je věnována průzkumu vztahu mezi představivostí a pohybem a jak tento vztah ovlivňuje hercovu kreativitu.

Hlavním motivem pro vznik diplomové práce je můj vděk za transformaci, kterou si mé tělo prošlo během studia na KATaPu. To je důvod, proč se domnívám, že obsah výuky mého oboru je obohacující jednak pro teoretiky, učitele nebo jiné odborníky ve světě múzických umění, stejně tak jako pro lidi, kteří mají jen zájem dozvědět se něco jiného o svém těle.

**Klíčová slova:** pohybová výchova, pohyb, držení těla, prostor, představivost, tvořivost, teorie pohybu, herecká pohybová výchova, jevištní pohyb.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED**

**AA** – authorial acting.

**BM** - Body in Motion subject class.

**DAMU** – Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

**HAMU** – Music and Dance Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

**KATaP** – The Department of Authorial Creativity and Pedagogy, commonly known by its Czech abbreviation derived from the original - Katedra autorské tvorby a pedagogiky.

**TM** – Training for Movement subject class.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the book *Awareness Through Movement* Moshe Feldenkrais devotes the first chapter of the book to explain the processes which build **the motor self-image** of an individual. The motor cortex is part of the brain responsible for the control and execution of voluntary movement. The activation of a particular muscle is actually triggered by the stimulation of certain cells in the motor cortex. <sup>1</sup>

Feldenkrais suggests imagining to color cells in the motor cortex each time an individual discovers the usage of new muscles. The progression of such a painting would evolve most wildly in the early years of an individual's life as we gradually learn how to go from sitting to standing, from eating to talking and so on. But eventually, after reaching early adolescence, the painting would cease to grow and achieve its final form. This form is an individual's motor self-image.

Similar principles can be applied to all human activity as separate parts of the brain are responsible for different actions such as sensing, feeling and thinking, each painting their own self-image. Though it may seem that man's ability is limitless, Feldenkrais reminds us that the colorfulness and size of an individual's self-image are dictated by society:

*"Minimum development of the individual satisfies the needs of society."*<sup>2</sup>

This way a person quickly falls into "the vicious circle of incomplete development and satisfaction with achievement"<sup>3</sup> as he or she judges him/herself in accordance with dominant social values and where an alternative can only be found by the desire to **self-improve**.

This final thought brings us to my own reasons why I applied to study authorial acting (from here on known as AA) at the Department of Authorial Creativity and

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<sup>1</sup> Feldenkrais, M. *Awareness Through Movement*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. New York : HarperCollins, 2009. 12 p. ISBN 978-0-06-250322-0.

<sup>2</sup> Feldenkrais 16.

<sup>3</sup> Feldenkrais 17.

Pedagogy (from here on known as KATaP). It was an internal notion, a constant thought going through my mind that I am not using my body as much as it could and wishes to be used. I could say the same for my voice and even mind.

The main theme of this master thesis is transformation. During my studies, I was fascinated by the transformation my body has undergone from the crippling law school student spending most of her time sitting to a person who now becomes restless if she sits for more than two hours. By revisiting my class notes and semester reflections I will dig-in to how movement is being taught at our department focusing on the three areas: **posture**, **space** and **imagination**.

I believe these areas are key topics with which every movement teacher at KATaP works with and constitute fundamental components of stage movement. To precisely define whose methods and classes I will be writing about:

- MgA. Mgr. Michaela Raisová, teaching **Body in Motion** (from here on known as BM) in the first program year,
- Mgr. Jiří Lössl, teaching BM in the second program year and
- MgA. Petra Oswaldová, teaching **Training for Movement** (from here on known as TM) in the first and second program year and **Feldenkrais** in the first program year.

For each one of the three areas: posture, space and imagination, I will devote a separate chapter through exploring **exercises** we did in class. The sources of information will be taken from my own notes and reflections as well as examining the movement exercises and teachings based on published theoretical works. I wish to point out that not all class exercises will be included. Rather, I chose those most fitting to each topic and the structure of the thesis work.

Apart from my personal and physical transformation I also noticed changes happening in the way I approach my creative work. From being a mostly text-based actress accustomed to realistic, natural like moves I have found a new creative force through experimenting with movement. This brought me to the realization - **there exists a natural link between the body and the mind. When properly connected, such a union gives way to a powerful force of creativity.** This will be explored in depth in the last chapter which focuses on the link between imagination and movement.

## 2. BUILDING POSTURE

It is almost impossible to pick up a book on movement, whether it is meant for actors, dancers or people who are not involved in the performing arts, which would not devote a portion of the text to posture.

Looking back on my class notes I realized that never during my two years of studies did a movement professor in class say: "Today, we are going to work on posture,". But this doesn't mean that we were not exposed to practices which helped us find and eventually maintain a healthy body posture.

The fact that there was no direct emphasis on how to properly hold one's body is in-line with the teaching methods at KATaP. Instead of talking about posture as an isolated topic, our teachers prepared movement exercises which foster the exploration and gradual control of specific body parts, movement actions and sensitivity that are crucial elements of posture. In my opinion, this non-direct approach – when you work with elements that assemble a particular subject instead of tackling the issue straight on, is a typical example of the **psychosomatic ways of teaching** that KATaP is known for.

I titled this chapter "Building Posture" for a very simple reason. Contemplating on the structure of our movement classes I realized that the road to achieving good posture could be described in three stages:

1. **rediscovering your body,**
2. **finding your center** and
3. **using your center.**

Before I dig-in to each separate stage, let's first acquaint ourselves with the term **balance** as the primal instigator of posture.

### 2.1. A Personal and Theoretical Note on Balance

When I think about balance I think of life in general. In my experience, the Eastern philosophy of Ying and Yan or even karma are a completely natural and logical state. You cannot have too much of something without feeling the

consequences of it later on. A simple example – if I only slept for three hours one night, then the next day I had an urge to go to sleep early. Or, if during my studies I would be overwhelmed with my tight class schedule and work for a longer period of time, I would get sick and collapse in bed. The body will tell you on its own how it feels and what it needs, the only question is how you're prepared to listen to it.

The journey of rediscovering balance within my body was and still is one of the most complex processes which I have embarked on. I believe that it is not only connected to the physical aspect, but heavily depends on a person's psychological state. In class, I would often receive comments that I try too hard and that I am wasting unnecessary energy, which causes me to burn out too quickly. I agree, and I also agree that this is not a cause of my body wanting to work harder, but my mind thinking that I need to push as much as possible to achieve the perfect result. That's why finding the proper balance or the golden mean represents to me a quest that lasts for a lifetime, making progress with each new life experience and wisdom.

In her book *The Thinking Body – A Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man* by Mable Elsworth Todd the author dedicates the first chapter of the book to explain the evolution of man's body. The key fact that helps us understand the laws of bodily balance is the transition of living beings from water to land. When living creatures started to develop on land this affected their two basic functions: movement and respiration. In comparison to man on land, a fish living in water does not seem to have as much problem with gravity. Rather, it works with it as water pressures the fish from all sides equally and as long as it displaces more than its own weight in water, it does not sink. But man living on land displaces less than his own weight in air and thus depends on the ground to hold him up against **gravity**, otherwise, he'd fall.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Elsworth Todd, M. *The Thinking Body – A Study of the Balancing Forces of Dynamic Man*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Gouldsboro, ME: The Gestalt Journal Press, 2008. 8 p. ISBN 978-0-939266-54-8.

*"The human being is a composite of balanced forces. To maintain his structural support with the least strain on the several parts is a problem of bodily adjustment to external forces, primarily mechanical."<sup>5</sup>*

Now I understand that posture is simply the body's natural response to fight the pull of gravity and maintain balance on the ground. The **bones** in our body are not merely the frame which shapes us, but also the frame which holds us up. According to Feldenkrais, it's the job of our skeletal structure to counteract the pull of gravity so the muscles are free for movement. Thus, in poor posture, the muscles are doing part of the job of the bones resulting in excess usage of energy.<sup>6</sup> In the bellow passage Elsworth Todd explains why this happens:

*"At that stage of the evolutionary process when man assumed the upright posture, he secured freedom of motion and a larger command over his environment that is possessed by any other creature. There are, however, mechanical disadvantages and points of weakness in his structural provision that threaten the stability of his support and the protection of his vital processes. To offset this weakness, it is imperative to recognize and properly utilize the principles of mechanics as applied to the main structural units in the vertical position."<sup>7</sup>*

Elsworth Todd reviews man's quest for balance as a constant battle of **opposite forces**. A force is always met with an opposite force: "a force pulling in one direction must be met by an equal pull in the other,".<sup>8</sup> Such principles can be easily applied to the way our body works. A good example is the functioning of the spine and the pelvis.

### **2.1.1. Our Pelvis as a Swinging Block**

Our spine and pelvis are key players in maintaining balance and upright posture. The weight of the head, shoulders and upper body are carried by the spine. The

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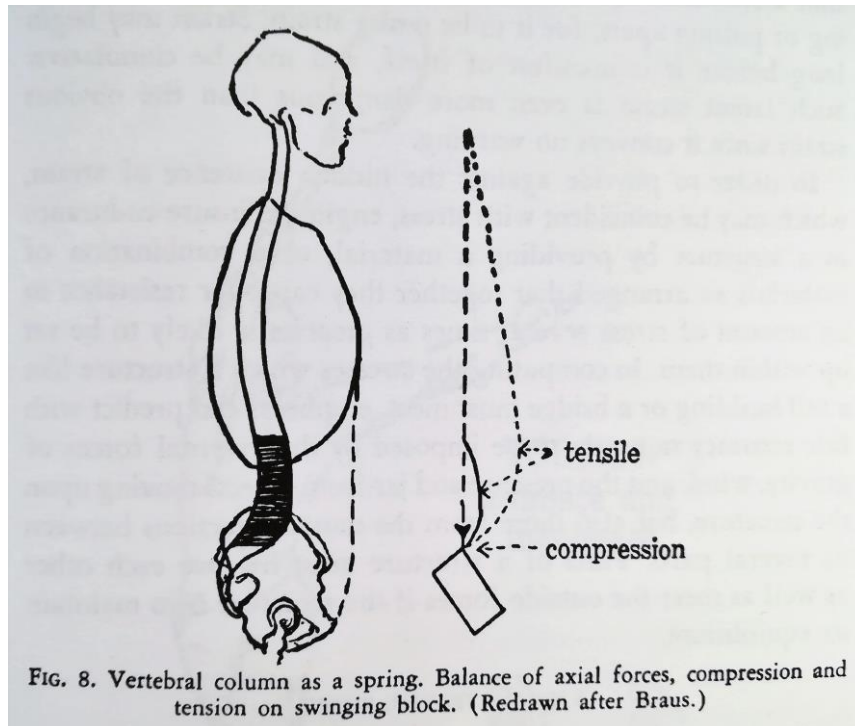
<sup>5</sup> Elsworth Todd 7.

<sup>6</sup> Feldenkrais 68.

<sup>7</sup> Elsworth Todd 7.

<sup>8</sup> Elsworth Todd 47.

biggest portion of the weight is carried by the lower back – the lumbar curve and it's also the area where you'll find the largest vertebrae.<sup>9</sup> For Elsworth Todd, the lumbar curve would represent a typical point of **strain** due to the **stress** of the weight.<sup>10</sup> Luckily, our spine connects to the pelvis and through it distributes the weight evenly on both sides further down to the knees and feet. This is possible because of the anatomical shape and flexibility of the pelvic girdle which functions similarly as a "swinging block".<sup>11</sup>



Source: Elsworth Todd, p. 49.

A simple exercise will help you understand the forces at work concerning weight distribution. If you stand without any regard to what your pelvis is doing and simply let it fall, three things will most likely happen (based on my own observation):

1. Your lumbar spine will push even more towards your inner organs, causing your belly to move forward.
2. Significant weight and stress will fall on your knees, causing them to bend your legs.

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<sup>9</sup> rev. Hines, T. Anatomy of the Spine [online] 2016 [cit. 2018-03-09]. Accessed from: <<https://d3djccaurgtij4.cloudfront.net/PE-AnatSpine.pdf>>.

<sup>10</sup> Elsworth Todd 48 – 50.

<sup>11</sup> Elsworth Todd 49.

3. You will start feeling discomfort in your ankles, especially in the frontal part.

Standing with a completely loose pelvis becomes quickly uncomfortable. If I understood the theory of opposite forces correctly, I can still say that my body is in balance and that the weight has been distributed from the lumbar spine down towards the knees and feet. But, such a distribution is not ideal for the skeletal structure with which our bodies are equipped with. Let's correct our posture with the help of the pelvis. To pick-up our pelvis, which seems to be sinking into the floor place your palm on the sacrum (the big flat bone sitting on the top of your buttocks):

1. Push-out the sacrum fully extending your buttocks outward, tightening your buttocks muscles will help.
2. Straighten your legs and open the knees outward.
3. Push your sacrum slightly back inside so that the bottom of the pelvis becomes parallel to the floor.
4. Tighten your belly muscles and take a breath feeling how your spine extends upward and shoulders align.

I deliberately chose not to speak about rotating or swinging your pelvis as people are normally not aware of the movements their pelvis is doing and more often confuse it with just moving their hips. But in fact, all the movements involving your sacrum were driven by the swinging of your pelvis from back to forth. Gaining greater pelvis sensitivity is key to achieving good posture.

As we have witnessed bad posture can be the cause of serious issues and pain connected to your lower back and knees as well as many other diseases.<sup>12</sup> These are the "mechanical disadvantages" and "points of weakness" that Ellsworth Todd speaks about helping us to understand why good posture is so important.

### **2.1.2. Extra Daily Balance vs. KATaP Balance**

The battle of forces that go on in our bodies is also recognized by the famous theatre practitioner Eugenio Barbra. In the book *A Dictionary of Theatre*

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<sup>12</sup> Elsworth Todd 52 – 53.



*Anthropology* one chapter is exclusively devoted to balance. For Barba balance creates a sort of: "[...] *elementary drama*: the opposition of different tension in the performer's body is sensed kinesthetically by the spectator as a conflict between elementary forces,".<sup>13</sup> But Barba does not occupy himself by going into details of the body's anatomy. He elaborates on what he calls "**extra daily balance**" and "**luxury balance**".<sup>14</sup> In such terms, the chapter describes stage movement techniques belonging to different theatre forms throughout history such as Indian Odissi and Kathkhalī dance, Chinese opera, *commedia dell'arte* and pantomime. In such disciplines, the actor trains for many years to conquer and maintain within his or her body an extreme or unnatural physical state.

*"This deformation of daily body technique is essentially based on an alteration of balance. Its purpose is to create a condition of permanently unstable balance. By rejecting "natural" balance, the Asian performer intervenes in the space by means of a "luxury" balance, uselessly complex, seemingly superfluous and costing excess energy."<sup>15</sup>*



Indian Odissi dancer. Source: Clipart Library, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, accessed from: <<http://clipart-library.com/clipart/n1297405.htm>>.

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<sup>13</sup> Barba, E., Savarese, N. *A Dictionary of Theatre Anthropology: The Secret Art of the Performer*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Abingdon, Oxon : Routledge, 2005. 37 p. ISBN 978-0-415-37861-1.

<sup>14</sup> Barba, Savarese 32.

<sup>15</sup> Barba, Savarese 32.

When going through Barba's text I quickly realized that at KATaP we do not focus on developing any specialized movement techniques such as the one mentioned above. Petra Oswaldová graduated from pantomime and non-verbal theatre and is a Feldenkrais practitioner. Apart from being a choreographer, Jiří Lössl has been teaching modern and contemporary dance as well as dance pedagogy to high-school and university students for more than two decades. As Jiří's former student Michaela Raisová continues with the principles of his teaching and includes exercises from contact-improvisation and basic of Tai Chi martial arts. These are all the influences that are found in our movement classes.

In my personal view, such techniques were not used to shape us into contemporary dancers, but larger bits and pieces were taken from each discipline to help us discover our full body potential and to bring us in connection with our body to learn how to control it within its natural and harmonic boundaries.

## **2.2. Rediscovering Your Body**

The first phase of achieving healthy and proper posture is to recognize your current posture patterns and habits. This is not possible without gaining greater **sensitivity of separate body parts** and your **body as a whole**.

Before my studies at KATaP, I would usually become aware of my body in its entirety only in extreme states, such as discomfort or pain. For instance, if I was sick I could recognize that the center of the pain is coming from the area around my stomach, but at the same time I could feel an extreme tiredness all over my body and how simple functions such as standing or lifting my arm needed ten times more energy than usual.

In a normally functioning state I would only be aware of separate body parts or muscles, for example the moving of my right arm when preparing for a forehand swing in tennis, the movement of separate fingers while they slide through the keyboard of an accordion or the upward extension of my neck if I was sitting too close to the cinema screen. What I was rarely aware of and did not explore was the holistic principles of how my body functions.

What the studies at KATaP gave me is the possibility to look at my body not from separate angles, but as a complex connection of different forces and processes acting at the same time. Now, if I feel a tension in my neck or shoulders while sitting, I will adjust my pelvis and tighten my tummy muscles to straighten up my spine; if I will get a headache I will simply honestly ask myself if I got enough sleep last night and take a rest. But before reaching such a heightened state of awareness and sensitivity I had to go through some basic stages of reconnecting with my body – gaining better **physical condition** and exploring **separate body parts**.

### **2.2.1.    Physical Condition**

Though it will be a little less than three years now, I have to admit that at the start of the first program year I was a very different person when it comes to having confidence in my movement abilities. Being used to sports like tennis, running, skiing and volleyball I always perceived the quality of my movements as rash and hard. I also had troubles with gaining steady **physical condition**.

Gaining condition is one of the first steps that helps to break down old movement patterns. All our practical classes contributed to building physical condition, but **BM class** had a clear objective to push our limits. Going through my earliest reflections there's an obvious trend in comprehending the difficultness of this subject. At first, I found it extremely tiresome and physically exhausting. In each next reflection entry, I would write something along the lines "still hard, but not as hard as the last time", up until mid-November 2015 when for the first time I was actually looking forward to Friday's BM class.

I am mostly thinking about the individual exercises that we did in two parallel rows which have a boot camp vibe such as: crawling forward while lying on our backs, shifting or body for 180 degrees by pushing with our hands on the floor, rolling on the floor and so on. At first, I had a lot of trouble executing these exercises correctly, because I was not using my center. I mostly relied on the muscles in my hands and carried my head too stiffly, which would easily result in neck pain.

Besides the boot camp exercises, Michaela Raisová's entire class had an intense vibe - be it walking around the room or various partnering exercises it was always necessary to attain a high level of concentration and sensitivity. Similar to the escalation of my appreciation for BM, my body's fondness for it also grew. The greatest benefit of this class in the beginning was that I realized an entirely new bodily potential. Through better physical condition your body becomes more alert and flexible for whatever physical activity that is to come. Similar as we read and study to train our brain, constant physical activity helps to create a **smarter and more reactive body**.

### **2.2.2. Sensing the Pelvis and Other Body Parts**

During her classes, Petra Oswaldová always put special emphasis on the **pelvis**. An enormous help towards building the sensitivity of feeling the existence of your pelvis and how it functions were the **Feldenkrais exercises**. Important exercises connected to the pelvis include:

- the pelvic clock,
- breathing exercises connected with the movement of the pelvis and
- learning how to turn from laying on your back on to the belly by initiating the movement from your feet or arms.

I believe that our Feldenkrais classes had a very quiet, yet substantial effect on all the other movement classes, because its effects stay in the body even days after the class. After finishing the above-described exercises, I would notice a different quality in my walk. Ever since I could remember I always walked inward, but after the lesson, I felt that my pelvis and both sides of my inner thighs would open outward and thus my feet started to walk in a straight line.

When starting the AA program, I was not sensitive enough to realize how separate body parts are connected to each other. That's why I was very surprised the first time we tried the turning from the back on to the belly exercise. It helped me realize the entire diagonal connection that runs through my body. The simplest way to try this:

1. Lie on your back with your arms extended above your head.

2. Then lift your left leg and your right arm.
3. Start moving your left leg towards the right, initiate the movement from your left toe.
4. When you feel the left side of your buttocks lifting from the floor embrace the twist happening in your lower spine and together with your pelvis shift on your belly.

If Feldenkrais works in a subtler way, then the exercises in **TM classes** where we worked with **separate body parts** are more direct in recognizing the abilities of each part. The exercise is quite simple – move in the space, but in such a way that you initiate the movement from a certain part of your body. Variations included starting from your pelvis, chest, shoulder, elbow, palm, head, knee or foot. This exercise affected me in two ways:

1. I recognized the connection and impact a certain part has on other body parts and
2. I discovered new ways of moving a specific part and my body so as not to constantly repeat the same patterns. I am used to using the knee

When I initiated the movement from my shoulder my arms had a sudden desire to move in different directions, flexing and extending. If I started the movement from my head, I noticed a fascinating connection between the head and the pelvis. The pelvis started to position itself more towards the floor and worked together with the knees to attain better grounding. When starting with the chest, my breathing became deeper and more in sync with the movement.

If I was used to using my knee only for flexing and extending my leg, I suddenly realized that the knee has its own character and can be its own master of the space around. Each body part gives your body a different quality and character. The pelvis caused me to move in a more puppet like manner, while the arms brought a sense of flow within me.

When focusing on and initiating the movement from a specific body part, I felt that the center of my gravity accumulated around its area - once attracting and another time dispersing gravity from all sides: up, down, left, right and any other diagonal direction. Yet it feels that the movement is going only in one direction for a small amount of time. Quickly an opposite force, another reaction in your

body will start to happen. If you start moving your shoulders, then the elbows will soon wish to join and later the wrists and fingers will follow. What happens is that a flow of energy passes through your body seeking for balance within a constantly changing structure.

### **2.3. Finding Your Center**

When people speak about finding your center in the body, you might think about it in more metaphysical terms such as body chakras used in various forms of Far East meditation techniques. But as we've found out at the beginning of this chapter – there are opposite forces constantly operating within our body. And to find the proper balance between these forces, we should find the place in our body that represents their meeting point through which we can control them.

Thus, when speaking about center it's not necessary to go into the metaphysical. In physics, there exists the term "**center of mass**" or "**center of gravity**" which is the point on an object or a system of objects where the weighted relative position of the distributed mass sums to zero.<sup>16</sup> For instance, think of a circle or square – its center of mass will be found right in the center of the object. Or in more blatant terms, take a spoon on your hand and find the spot on its handle so that you balance the spoon on your finger.

The term "finding your center" is also commonly used in the Chinese martial art **Tai Chi**. Finding your central equilibrium or *Zhong Ding* is the base for everything else in Tai Chi.<sup>17</sup> This is where the focus of your intention lies and from where you initiate movement. The physical center of gravity is located about two to three finger widths under the belly button, and halfway between the front and back of your body.<sup>18</sup> To get a better visual idea, the picture below is an

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<sup>16</sup> Khan, S. What is the centre of mass? [online] 2008 [cit. 2018-03-09]. Accessed from: <<https://www.khanacademy.org/science/physics/linear-momentum/center-of-mass/a/what-is-center-of-mass>>.

<sup>17</sup> Paler, J. Tai Chi for Better Balance [online] 2017 [cit. 2018-03-09]. Accessed from: <<https://taichionlineclasses.com/finding-your-center/>>.

<sup>18</sup> Paler, J. Tai Chi for Better Balance [online] 2017 [cit. 2018-03-09]. Accessed from: <<https://taichionlineclasses.com/finding-your-center/>>.

example of one of the basic Tai Chi positions in standing clearly showing the central equilibrium of the body.

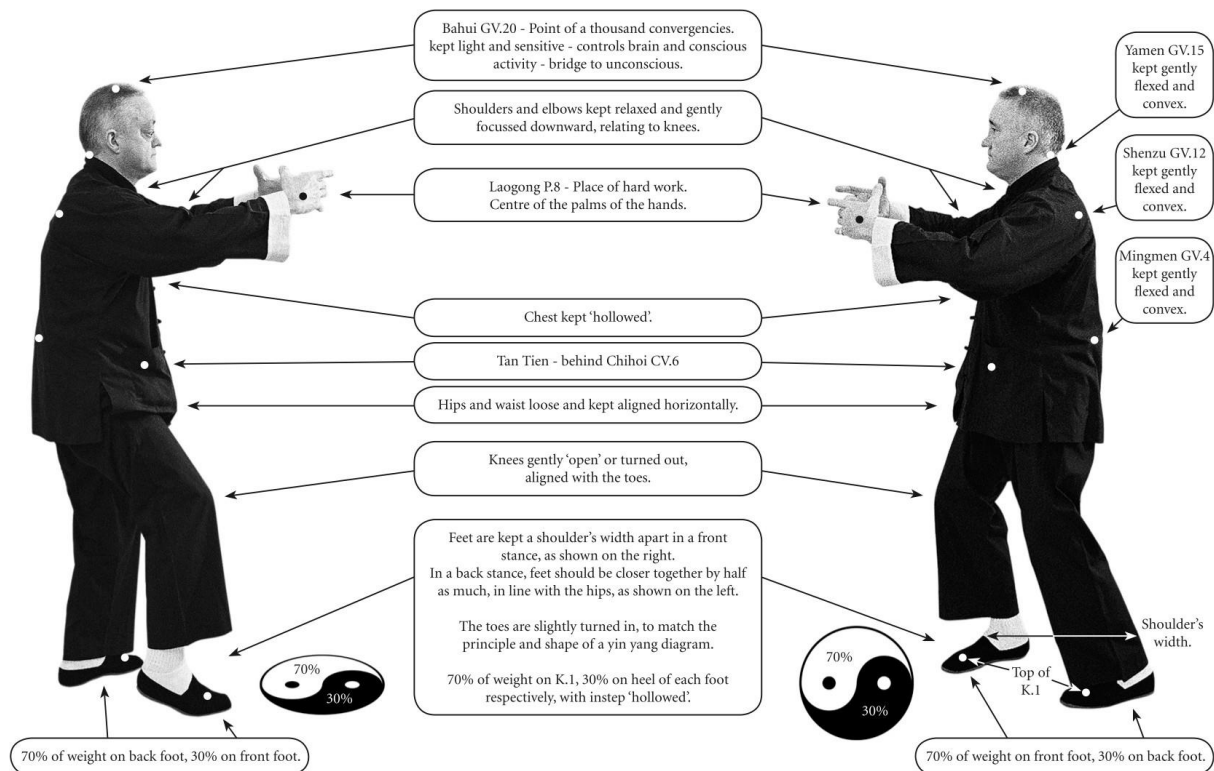


Figure 15: Central Equilibrium - The Essentials of the Tai Chi Chuan and Chi Kung posture.

Source: Taoist Group, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, accessed from: <<http://www.taoistgroup.com/qigong-exercises/>>.

I've chosen three exercises which in the first semester of the first program year helped me to find my center: **working with the floor exercise**, **the walking exercise** and **the impulse exercise**. The three exercises were commonly repeated during all our movement classes and are especially appropriate to explore the topic since we kept working on them from the early class days until the end of our studies. Through the procession of time, I managed to gain a good overview and to distinguish the difference between the time when I was finding my center and when I grasped its essence.

### 2.3.1. Working with the Floor Exercise

Starting to move your way up from the floor is one of the most typical exercises encountered in KATaP movement classes. Reflecting on my very first experience

with this exercise at **BM** with Michaela I was very lost and out of balance. I think the last part is especially ironic since you start *on the floor*.

Instruction:

1. You lie on your back with your arms beside your body and palms open to the ceiling.
2. First, you simply observe your body and feel the parts of your body that touch the floor.
3. Give kind focus to these parts and enjoy the feeling of touching the floor, feeling the floor and eventually simply sinking into the floor.
4. Start to slowly move your body from your back on to the sides and belly, while still trying to have as much of your body touching the floor. Keep the movement fluent without big pauses and initiate the movement from your center. Do not use your hands. Speed-up the process during time.
5. After a while move one level up to "all fours". Now, you can use your hands, but still, initiate the movement from your center and keep in mind previous principles.
6. After a certain amount of time slowly proceed to an upright position changing your pace from slow to fast. Again, feel the connection between different parts of your body and your center. Enjoy the feeling of grounding - feel how your center is attracted to the floor and your pelvis is parallel to the ground, with your knees slightly bent, but your body is not crouched.
7. Slowly stop and proceed into normal walking until completely ceasing movement in standing position.

Remember when I wrote about the transition of living beings from the water onto land? When this happened, creatures first crawled on the ground, then grew limbs which were eventually strong enough that they used them for getting off the ground until man's predecessors managed to move simply by walking on two legs. When thinking about this now, I see the above-described exercise as a small trip through evolution.

It makes sense that at first, I did not feel any connection with my center at all. In my first semester reflection for BM, I wrote that I still have a lot of problems feeling my center and that I am not even sure where exactly it is. I also remember that the concept of feeling a connection with my body and the floor



was completely foreign to me. While laying down I had a constant tension in my body wishing to rise and go up. That is why my entire lower back, the upper part of my shoulders and the top of the spine supporting my neck were not touching the floor at all. When starting to move around on the floor and proceeding to the next level things got even more difficult as I mostly relied on the strength of my arms. All in all, I felt a great discomfort and unbalance, which made it difficult to clear my head and give in to the movement itself. Only in the second part of the second semester things started to greatly change for me. But, more on this topic in the paragraphs to come.

### **2.3.2. The Walking Exercise**

The reader not used to movement training might laugh at the idea that walking is something normally functioning adults would train. But if we go back to the theoretical base on balance and posture, walking is the next big chapter movement theoreticians speak about.

Simply described - walking is a dynamic shift of balance from one leg to another. But within this process, the entire body participates and if one wishes to achieve the understanding of a normal, healthy walk it's important to realize everything that is going on in our bodies. In the book *Movement Theory and Practice*, Jarmila Kröschlová cites the three stages of walking<sup>19</sup> described by the artist Josef Zrzavý taken from his book *Anatomy for Visual Artists*:

1. The phase of "**peeling off**", when the front foot lifts, starting at the heel, and pressure is applied to the forefoot and toes. Because of pressing on the floor the front leg pushes the body forward on the toes and the body's weight is transferred onto the same leg which stretches vertically.
2. The phase of the "**swing**" starts when the back leg is completely peeled off the floor. At the same time, while the peeling off the front foot is happening, the back leg swings forward, gradually stretches, then touches the floor starting with the heel and takes over the support of the body from the previous front leg.

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<sup>19</sup> Kröschlová, J. *Movement Theory and Practice*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Sydney : Currency Press, 2000. 273 p. ISBN 0-86819-577-4.

3. The phase of **"double support"** is when both feet are touching the floor – the front leg touches at the heel and the back leg touches at the tip of the toe. This is the most unstable position, but also extremely short.

Such a transition of the legs is possible due to their connection with the spine through the pelvis. Elsworth Todd thoroughly explains:

*"Control of the cumulative weight is accomplished by the deep lower and inner back and pelvic muscles, which reach well up into the thorax and down into the legs. The most important muscle group, the iliopsoas, is actually supported by the strongest and largest positions of the spine and from the broad areas of the hip bones. These structures are attached to each vertebra of the lumbar spine and to the lower thoracic. The leg thus swings from the largest and strongest portion of the spine, and by the deepest trunk muscles. These muscles have the greatest range of attachments. All the muscles around the pelvis help to support the weight, of course, but the iliopsoas group both centers and support it."*<sup>20</sup>

I greatly appreciated the visit of **prof. Jiří Čumpelík** from HAMU – a former dancer, yoga teacher and physiotherapist especially devoted to working with dancers. With a few simple exercises, Mr. Čumpelík helped us to explore the connection between the feet and the pelvis. We gave special attention to the usage of the entire foot area while pressing on the floor and the setting-in of the bones of our legs where they connect with the pelvis. Emphasis was also made on the connection between the legs and the arms. It was wonderful when prof. Čumpelík dissected the stages of walking similarly as described above by Zrzavý pointing our attention to the "swing". It is in the swing stage that not only the front and back leg start to exchange, but also the hands, which symmetrically follow the movement of the legs. It's very important to note that when walking the movement of the hands and the legs is **homolateral** – the right hand swings forward when the left leg is going up front and then the same is done by the left hand and right leg. If you pay special attention to the moment of the switch, if you stop for a split second when it happens, you are able to have better control

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<sup>20</sup> Elsworth Todd 201.

over the changes happening in your pelvis, knees and feet, which helps you make more precise steps.

In KATaP movement classes walking was used for the purpose of training two separate topics:

- posture and balance,
- working with space, rhythm and tempo.

In regard to posture, walking is one of the most basic tools to realize whether you are using your center or not. In any of the three movement classes, we would often start by simply walking around the room. This functioned as a great restart button. During walking, you forget what you were previously doing and simply focus on the task at hand.

In the second semester, when I have become more sensitive and aware of my body, I started to use walking to scan and correct my posture. I examined my pelvis, whether it was positioned too low, I checked if I was using my entire foot to step on the ground, I straightened my spine and made sure my shoulders were not slouched. Even today, when in the morning I start walking on the street or during my morning run, I re-position and reset my body in the same way.

Another way our teachers used walking was after finishing an exercise connected to using our centers and finding balance, e.g. after the floor exercise. I found such an approach very effective and beneficial, because you could quickly see the difference between your walk before and after performing a certain exercise. It is much easier to feel your center and to attain the feeling of being grounded to the floor while walking after you have worked extensively on an exercise that focused on finding and using your center. Due to the heightened sensitivity, I managed to be much more aware of the processes which compose walking and discover totally new qualities in my steps.

### **2.3.3.     *The Impulse Exercise***

The impulse exercise is a classic among KATaP movement classes. The instruction is fairly easy. You work in pairs:

1. One person stands with his or her feet spread on the floor in an approx. distance of 50 centimeters.
2. The knees are slightly bent and your pelvis is parallel to the floor.
3. The upper body, shoulders and neck are relaxed. The eyes can be closed at first.
4. The partner is in close proximity to the one standing and is touching him or her on various parts of the body. The touch is in a form of a slight push done with the palm of the hand. The partner should make sure that the given impulse is not too short, nor too long and to find a balance between a soft and a strong push.
5. The person receiving reacts to the push spontaneously, following where the body leads him or her, while maintaining a soft upper body and keeping the feet firmly on the ground.
6. After a while, the partners switch and repeat the exercise.

It's important for the person that is giving the impulse to find the golden middle of the length and strength of the push. This way the person receiving will feel the impulse as a temporary presence still lingering in his or her body even after the palm has long gone away.

This exercise can remind you of **being like a tree** through which the wind blows. This way it is easier to comprehend the forces at work. In normal conditions, when the tree is well rooted the branches and leaves will shake, but when the wind stops the tree will rest back in its former position. The roots can be compared to our own feet and legs. If we are grounded well, then the impulse will not shift us out of balance, but much like the tree our torso, arms and head will move until we slowly resume the initial stable position.

## **2.4. Using Your Center**

The final stage in building proper posture is reaching the point where you have found your center and are able to use it much more efficiently. In the first months of training, there is no clear separation between *finding* and *using* your center. The exercises for both are often the same. It is more about the differentiation between the stage when you are still searching for your center and

the stage when you feel that you have found it, resulting in a much better execution of the exercises.

In the following subchapter, I've decided to speak about **partnering exercises** and the **playing with paper** exercise from BM. In comparison to the previously described exercises, these are technically more demanding. I believe one needs to use his or her center properly to fulfill the exercise as they are meant to be done and thus discover their essence.

### **2.4.1. Partnering Exercises**

In **BM** classes with Michaela Raisová, special focus was given to various types of partnering exercises. It was very common that in almost every class we would work in pairs for at least forty minutes.

The most famous exercise was **exchanging hands** while letting your bodies hang opposite to one another in a diagonal position.

1. Two people stand opposite one another from a distance of approx. 50 centimeters with their legs apart – slightly more than the width of one's pelvis.
2. They both extend their right hand in front of them and hold hands by the wrists. Their left arms hang freely beside their bodies.
3. They bend their knees and move their upper bodies backward creating an almost diagonal line with the spine while extending their arms in front of them. They still hold by the wrists tightly.
4. Slowly in a common pace, the pair proceeds down by bending their knees. They make sure that their arms remain extended by giving an equal amount of weight to one another so as not to fall.
5. The pair stops when they both arrive at a squat position and then go up again in a reversed manner.
6. When they arrive at the highest position possible they swiftly, but not hastily, let go of the grip and exchange their right hands for the left ones.
7. The pair repeats the journey up and down as described before.
8. The exchange of hands can be repeated a couple of times.

It is almost impossible to execute this exercise if you do not use your center. The two bodies work as a balance scale. But since there is no intermediate pillar for support, the partners must constantly balance themselves by giving and receiving weight to remain at an equal level, otherwise, they will fall. This can only be done by maintaining a strong notion of your center and good grounding. It is through the center that you control the transition of your weight.

It's very common not to do this exercise properly. In the beginning, I mostly relied on the strength of my hands and simply dropping my weight by hanging in a diagonal position. Each person must work hard not only to find his or her center, but to comprehend how to use it, because when you work in pairs a whole new set of variabilities start to appear. Adjustments need to be made depending on the weight and height of your partner. That's why a double balance is occurring – one is between the pair and one is happening within each person. Your center needs to remain stable so that your upper and lower body can constantly move without falling on the floor.

Exchanging hands was one of our first partnering exercises. In the second semester of the first program year, Michaela raised the level by making us move more around the space. A popular task for pairs was the “**tango**”.

1. Two people stand opposite one another with their arms half extended and hold each other by the elbows.
2. Their knees are slightly bent to get into a good grounding position.
3. One partner starts moving around the space while the other follows. The one who follows should be careful to maintain soft knees and not to stiffen his body. The arms contract and extend freely depending on the current movement while they both still hold each other by the elbows.
4. They change pace from slow to fast.
5. After a while, the one who follows becomes the leader.
6. When the pair becomes more secure in the dance they freely start to exchange the leader and the follower.

When does the pair become more secure in the dance? It's all about **listening to your partner and connecting to his or her center**. Gaining the ability to listen and follow the needs of your partner is one of the key outcomes of such exercises.

The first stage of the tango is more about listening to the partner - connecting with his or her center and recognizing the movement patterns. It makes sense that there is a clear definition between the leader and the follower. The leader will introduce to the follower his or her preferred style of movement, e.g. how fast he or she likes to go, how quickly will the direction change and what's the usual distance the leader likes to maintain between them. By trying out different things, the leader will realize the partner's limits that still represent comfortable active movement. At the same time, it's important that the follower does not resist, but maintains soft knees and a relaxed upper body. When everything starts coming together it will seem as if the pair is gliding through the space.

In such a way both partners are listening to one another and adjusting their movement patterns to discover and co-create a common style that will suit both. We no longer have *mine* and *yours*, but *ours*. This is when the dance can really develop and the partners start to exchange the roles freely.

#### **2.4.2.    *Playing with Paper***

One of the first exercises we did in **BM** with Jiří Lössl in the second program year was playing with paper. It's important to note that in our first year BM was taught by Michaela Raisová and in the second the class is taken over by Jiří Lössl. Through my conversations with Michaela, I understood that Jiří was a big influence on her own artistic path and training. In a way, you could compare it to the union of a master and apprentice. Michaela insisted that at KATaP Jiří prefers to work with students after they have already gained the basics of grounding, partnering and working with your center.

The **paper exercise** is very simple in its essence. Jiří gave us a piece of empty, A4 paper and we received the following instructions:

1. Extend your arm in front of you (right or left). Open the palm of your hand and place the paper on it.
2. Slowly start to walk around the space, making sure the paper does not fall on the floor.

3. After a while, you change the pace and start moving faster. Soon you also experiment with different levels: up and down, meanwhile making sure the paper stays on your palm.
4. Also, experiment with trying the exercise with your right as well as your left palm.
5. After a while turn over your hand and place the paper on the top of it and repeat the exercise from the beginning.

At first, my paper kept falling off and after looking around the room I realized it was because I was walking too straight and had no grounding. Only when I lowered my center a bit I started having better control over the paper. And the faster I started moving around, changing levels, direction and turning my body, the more I had to go down and bend my knees while keeping my pelvis parallel to the floor.

A very important and surprisingly different thing I had to take into account when working with paper was speed and the movement of my arms in comparison to the movement of the rest of my body.

Because the paper is sitting on the palm of your hand, the majority of control over its movement is handled by your arm. Yet, at the same time, the legs are the body part which move and carry you across the space. That is why an interesting division and symbiosis develops within your own body. I had to find the right balance between the movement of my legs and the movement of my arm, which was doing totally different things to make sure the paper does not fall on the floor. Because paper is an extremely light material you need to apply a sufficient amount of pressure so that it remains on your hand when you move with it. That's why your arm is doing big and fast wavy like movements in all directions.

If in previously described exercises such as the impulse game, the tango and the partnering exercises, I felt that there is an outside force shaping the way I move, it is the exact opposite with paper. Here I felt that I was the "boss" and that the success of the exercises depends on my own ability to properly adapt my movement. Now I am not the tree through which the wind blows, but the wind itself which carries the leaves in the air and tosses them around the ground.



Even though I said that I am in control, there is still a lot of change happening. This comes from the contact with paper as a totally different material and “body” from that of my own. When you are doing partnering exercises you are working with someone that is built from the same material and his or her body is governed by the same principles as yours. But in contact with paper, I felt that the **quality of my movement** changed. In order to successfully move around with the paper, I felt that my body started to attain qualities such as lightness, swiftness and flexibility.

I believe that such a change would not be possible if by that time I was not already able to use my center at a more advanced level. It's a common principle that first, you need to fully discover and master a certain skill and then based on that knowledge you can start to change and experiment with it.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

It's necessary to explain that the order of the above-described exercises does not correspond to the order in which they followed in class. Apart from the tango and the paper exercise, which were introduced to us later, all the other exercises were with us from the start and were constantly being repeated throughout the first program year.

This does not mean that the classes lacked structure. Teachers rather worked with specific topics and organized the classes in the way that suited our development needs. Most of the previously described exercises were regularly present, because I believe that constant work with posture and using our center is the base towards inhabiting healthy every-day movement patterns as well as reaching a more advanced level of stage movement skills.

Even if the exercises kept being repeated, my execution was not always the same. It's good that you perform a certain exercise over and over again throughout a longer period of time. This way you can notice the difference between your body at the time when you started and your present state.

I've realized that a strong influence on my posture and movement patterns is my height. I believe it is one of the main reasons I had problems finding and connecting with my center. Because of my height, it's natural for me to have a higher positioned vision periphery. Also, especially in the beginning, I had a lot of problems with "turning off" my head. I was concerned about how things looked on the outside, instead of just focusing on *doing*. This focus on the upper part of my body disconnects me from the rest of it. At the same time, my height forces me to be slightly bent so as to gain better contact with other people, who are usually of smaller height. This resulted in developing rounded shoulders and a forward extending neck, which, I have realized, blocks my breathing. Month by month I have managed to reset and adjust my body based on new findings. This process is still going on and the tool which helps me the most is the ability of self-observation and awareness.

As I am writing this now, I realized that in our classes I missed a better explanation of the theory on posture and movement principles. While exploring the anatomy of the pelvis more in-depth I started to understand better the changes that my body has been experiencing. I also realized where I still need to put special focus on and how to adjust a movement habit faster by understanding the theory behind. It's important that we write reflections during class and at the end of the semester. But there remains the danger that we stay too much within ourselves and our way of thinking. That is why some objective knowledge should help us get a fresh perspective on things.

### 3. DISCOVERING SPACE

Before my studies at KATaP, I rarely thought about space as a concrete matter. I would notice basic things such as size, light, openness and often evaluate a space simply based on how I felt while being there. I believe this is mostly due to its extremely basic and inclusive nature – ever since I can remember I was surrounded by a certain type of space.

What the movement classes at KATaP helped me to realize was the relationship between my body and the space within which I moved. I started to perceive space not as something abstract, but as something forever changing. And especially when thinking about empty space – the typical type of space with which we work at KATaP, I realized the power that a person can have over the composition of a space. Based on this I have decided to divide the following chapter into two parts:

- **the inner space**, which includes the **layers exercise** from BM and
- **the outer space**, which includes the **visi-battle exercise** from TM and the exploration of how my body experiences **moving within a group**.

#### 3.1. The Inner Space

In a way, I perceive that every movement is connected with your inner space. You are the initiator of the movement and the starting point of everything that is to come. My own understanding of inner space is closely connected to Moshe Feldenkrais's theory on **self-image** and man's ability to **develop through learning**.

Through Feldenkrais exercises, you become more aware of your body parts, how they are connected and thus your body as a whole. Each time I would discover something new about my body – a muscle, a bone and even empty space such as the one that exists in the head or pelvis, I would consequently start to be more aware of it and use it. This is especially fascinating since the specific part has always been there, I was just not aware of it.

A famous movement theoretician who observed and defined the topic of inner space was **Rudolf Laban**. Laban developed his own method of describing movement called the Laban Movement Analysis. One of the four major categories of his theory is space; others include body, effort (energetic dynamics) and shape.<sup>21</sup> Laban does not only perceive space as a concrete room or place, but closely observes the different dynamics that occur and the human body which moves in the space. That's why Laban uses terms such as dimension, direction, levels and closely connected to this chapter – kinesphere.

**Kinesphere** is the space around us within reaching possibilities of the limbs without changing one's place.<sup>22</sup> Depending on whether the person chooses to do big or small movements his or her kinesphere can also range from Far Reach, Mid Reach or Near Reach Kinesphere.<sup>23</sup>

Laban loved to describe and find analogies for human movement in space within the world of geometrical shapes. He concludes that the human body can move in 26 directions. These can be found within three basic levels: upper, mid and lower where the human limbs can also move in a one-, two- or three-dimensional directions. All 26 directions are derived from the vertices (inner lines) of the following geometric bodies: the Octahedron, the Icosahedron and the Cube.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Jobe, K. What is Laban Movement Analysis? [online]. 2013 [cit. 2018-03-09].

Accessed from: <<http://katejobe.com/about/lab-an-movement/>>.

<sup>22</sup> Konie, R. A Brief Overview of Laban Movement Analysis [online]. 2011 [cit. 2018-03-09]. 5 p. Accessed from: <<http://www.movementhasmeaning.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/LMA-Workshop-Sheet.pdf>>.

<sup>23</sup> Tsachor, R. P. Shafir, T. A Somatic Movement Approach to Fostering Emotional Resiliency Through Laban Movement Analysis. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* [online]. 2017, vol. 11, art. 410. [cit. 2018-03-09]. 4 p. Accessed from: <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5594083/pdf/fnhum-11-00410.pdf>>.

<sup>24</sup> Space Harmony. In Wikipedia : the free encyclopedia [online]. St. Peterburg (Florida): Wikimedia Foundation, 2001 –, last modif. 1 July 2017. [cit. 2018-03-09]. 4 p. Accessed from: <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space\\_Harmony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Space_Harmony)>.



Kinesphere within Icosahedron. Source: Chantes Dance, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, accessed from: <<http://chantesdance.blogspot.com/>>.

Within the terms of Laban Movement Analysis inner space is mostly connected to the space within one's body. Laban's famous student and successor Irmgard Bartenieff describes inner space in the following way:

*"Movement goes out into space and creates shapes. But also there is inner space, and breath is an inner shaping experience. The body shrinks and grows with each breath. Inner breath changes can be supported by sound. Posture is not built by muscles but by the whole way you breathe."*<sup>25</sup>

Based on my own experience I perceive the inner space as both the space within your body as well as the kinesphere. For me, the kinesphere still represent a very intimate space – a space that is within my own reach and when I am working/moving alone only I have control over it and can shape it based on my inner impulses, emotions, desires and intentions.

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<sup>25</sup> Konie, R. A Brief Overview of Laban Movement Analysis [online]. 2011 [cit. 2018-03-09]. 2 p. Accessed from: <<http://www.movementhasmeaning.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/LMA-Workshop-Sheet.pdf>>.

### **3.1.1. They Layers Exercise**

As I have stated previously – every movement that we do is connected to our inner space. But if we narrow the term down, then Jiří Lössl's **BM** classes are heavily focused on developing and expanding our perception of the space that lives inside us.

An exercise that explores the inner dynamics of our movement is dedicated to differentiating and using the three intra-connected layers of our body: skin, muscles and bones. The first part of the exercise is performed in pairs.

- 1. Skin:** One person stands while the other gives impulses by touching him or her with the palm and gently moves the skin on various parts of the body. Slowly the partner reacts to the impulses and begins to move around the space. The other person continues to lead him through the touch. After a while, the person who is touching leaves and the partner moves freely with the previous notion of being touched.
- 2. Muscles:** The procedure is the same as above. But the quality of the touch is different. The one who is giving the impulses should take more time to feel and dig into the muscles. He or she should give greater attention to listen and follow the partner while leading him around the space. Do not initiate an impulse that will strike the partner as unnatural to his current position.
- 3. Bones:** The same procedure and principles apply as when working with skin and muscles. Working with bones can be the most difficult. The one who is giving the impulses should really take the time to feel the bones and is not mistakenly giving focus to the muscles.

I still remember that I was greatly surprised by the difference in the quality of my movement in every layer. When working with **the skin** I felt that my body was moving very fluently and lightly. At the same time, I felt I was extremely sensitive to what was going on and to the impulses I received.

A totally different thing happened when working with my **muscles**. When I started to move around the space, I did not move the body parts which were receiving the impulse. Instead, the touch that affected my muscles sent an

impulse to another body part. For instance, my partner touched the muscles on my arm, but I would move my spine.

In contrary to my expectation, moving by focusing on my **bones** did not cause me to become stiff, but made me gentler. At the same time, I felt I was moving as a puppet on strings and was much more aware of which body parts I was moving.

For the second part of the game, we divided into two groups. Three people were standing in a line and each of them had an instruction whispered in their ear to move down the space either from skin → muscles → bones or from bones → muscles → skin. The rest of the students watched and had to recognize in which order a certain person was moving.

### **3.1.2. Principles of Body-Mind Centering**

Going through the literature I gathered for this thesis, I manage to borrow a wonderful book titled *Sensing, Feeling and Action: The Experimental Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering* by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen. Bonnie is the founder of the Body-Mind Centering method which approaches the study of movement not only through the classical anatomical or biomechanical principles, but also through the psychophysical. It is an integrated approach of studying movement by including and researching the impact of all the bodily systems: skeletal, ligamentous, muscular, organs, endocrine, nervous, fluid, fascial, fat and skin.<sup>26</sup>

One of the key principles and goals of Body-Mind Centering is that participants develop awareness of how their body functions through self-discovery and openness. In the introduction of the book it reads as follows:

*"In BMC, "centering" is a process of balancing, not a place of arrival. This balancing is based on dialogue, and the dialogue is based on experience. [...] However, alignment itself is not a goal. It is a continual dialogue between*

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<sup>26</sup> Bainbridge Cohen, B. *Sensing, Feeling and Action: The Experimental Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Northampton, MA : Contact Editions, 1999. 2-4 p. ISBN 0-937645-03-6.

*awareness and action – becoming aware of the relationships that exist throughout our body/mind and acting from that awareness. This alignment creates a state of knowing.*<sup>27</sup>

I notice a lot of similarities between Bainbridge Cohen's philosophy and that of Moshe Feldenkrais. Principally, that our movement cannot simply be isolated within the physical, but that it is influenced by our entire body, even or especially by the conscious and unconscious processes of our mind.

Going through Bonnie's book I managed to grasp a better understanding of what was happening in the layers exercise. **Skin** is our outermost layer and through it, we separate and define ourselves from the rest of the world, as well as establish the first contact with objects and people. Bonnie sees the skin as having a two-faced function both as "our first line of defense and bonding".<sup>28</sup>

The **skeletal system** is our basic support structure. The bones and the ligaments which bind the bones "lever us through the space and support our weight in relationship to gravity,".<sup>29</sup> It gives our body basic form not only by shaping us in the space, but also enables the mind to become "structurally organized" in comprehending and articulating our existence and ideas in the space.<sup>30</sup>

The **muscular system** supports the skeletal system "by providing elastic forces that move the bones through space,".<sup>31</sup> They also represent forces such as vitality and our bodily power.

Based on this new information I can understand why my body reacted in the way it did while working with separate layers. The elevation in my sensitivity in the first phase was triggered by the extremely high employment of the skin. The flowy feeling of movement corresponds to the qualities of lushness and

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<sup>27</sup> Bainbridge Cohen 1.

<sup>28</sup> Bainbridge Cohen 4.

<sup>29</sup> Bainbridge Cohen 2.

<sup>30</sup> Bainbridge Cohen 2.

<sup>31</sup> Bainbridge Cohen 3.



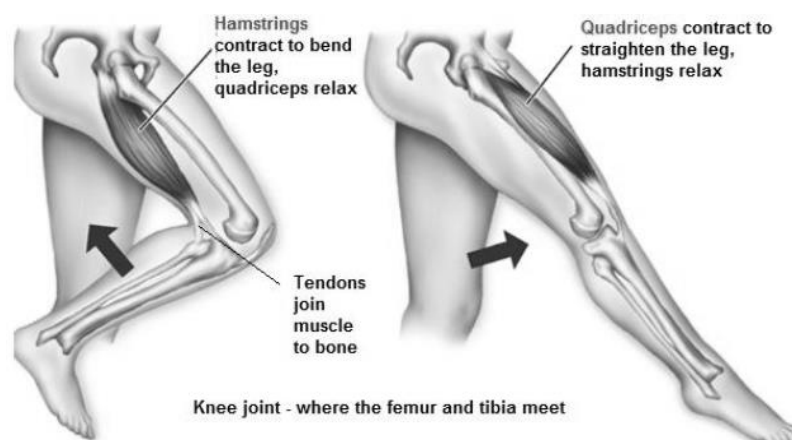
sensuousness<sup>32</sup> while the extra sensitivity was a result of awakening my alertness towards the world around me.

I believe that the presence of greater precision of my movement while working with the bones has a lot to do with a clearer image of form being shaped in my mind. By reaching and defining the bones, I managed to sense the most basic boundaries of my body. This helped me in two ways:

- greater awareness of my skeletal system helped me to recognize and distinguish which parts of my body I was moving at a certain time and
- a stronger image of my bodily form and boundaries aided me to differentiate between *me* and the space within which I was moving.

But what remains a mystery for me is the reaction of my body while working with the muscles. After consulting about this with Petra, she encouraged me to think about the changes that I experienced during Feldenkrais lessons, especially the moment when I stood up after a lesson and slowly walked across the room to rescan my body.

Often, muscles work in antagonistic pairs – as one muscle contracts the other relaxes or lengthens. This is necessary if we wish to move, that is if we wish to move our bones, because muscle activity relies on the layout of the skeletal structure. A good example is the extension and flexion of the leg. When you flex your knee the hamstrings contract to produce the movement, while the quadriceps relaxes to allow the movement to occur.



Source: Immanuel College, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018,

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<sup>32</sup> Bainbridge Cohen 17.

accessed from: <<https://www.immanuelcollege.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Football-extension-learn-sheet.pdf>>.

In functional muscle activity, there is a balance within the antagonistic muscle pairs. When this is not the case, one muscle works more than the other resulting in the feeling of muscle tension. That's why when I stood up after a Feldenkrais lesson I felt zero tension within my body and was extremely at ease. I felt I was using only two-thirds of my usual energy to move around.

This lightness of moving and the light readiness I felt in my body during the layers exercise might explain better the way my body reacted while working only with muscles. Because I eliminated the state of tension to be more open towards the impulses, the muscle connection which flows within my body and connects with the bones was more open and free. I believe this resulted in greater engagement of my body - embracing its entirety, playing with and enjoying its own structure.

### **3.2. The Body in the Outer Space**

If the previous subchapter was focused on the delicate space found within our body and in our proximity, then the following chapter reaches out dealing with **space as an independent matter**. But for the purpose of this thesis and in accordance with our movement classes at KATaP, I will be talking about the outer space concerned with **the stage** and its relationship with the actor.

In theatre circles space is one of the most important elements of a performance. In the traditional sense, the stage is an empty space waiting to be filled by the stage design, the actor's actions and language. On stage, we create a new world, which is governed by the same basic elements as the real world such as time, sound, dynamics etc., but in theatre, we are allowed to go to different extremes. Antonin Artaud calls the *mise-en-scène* "a language in space and in movement".<sup>33</sup> Indeed, I see the stage as an ever-changing and dynamic space, which continuously shapes and complements itself in front of the audience's

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<sup>33</sup> Artaud, A. *The Theater and its Double*. 1st ed. New York : Grove Press, 1994. 45 p. ISBN 0-8021-5030-6.

eyes. Be it either through the movement of the lights, the change of set-design or the actor's moves and language.

In her book *Stage Movement: Movement Training for Actors* Eva Kröschlová speaks about an actor's **sense for the dramatic** space which manifests itself in two ways:

1. the actor's sensitivity of his own bodily architecture and movement capabilities and
2. the actor's sensitivity for the usage of space, e.g. the ability to move in front, at the back, at the sides or to use different levels (down, up).<sup>34</sup>

As is evident, Kröschlová's also separates between the inner and the outer space.

An important aspect of the actor's connection to the outer space in Kröschlová's opinion is also **imagination**. Because the stage is an empty space waiting to be filled, this enables limitless possibilities. With his or her body the actor must learn how to express the vast or the small space and its depth, a high or a narrow ceiling and whether he or she is sitting on a rock or a bed.<sup>35</sup>

Another important aspect of stage movement is also the actor's relationship towards others in the space. By working with the distance between each other actors reveal the state of their current relationship. By mastering the timing of their movement and with the usage of different types of movement styles they compose the dynamics of the energy of the space. All the above-described skills concerned with the actor's movement on stage ultimately work towards one goal – to describe the dramatic situation and create dramatic tension for the audience.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Kröschlová, E. *Jevištní pohyb: Herecká pohybová výchova*. 4th ed. Prague : Publishing AMU, 1990. 44 p. ISBN 80-7331-910-1.

<sup>35</sup> Kröschlová, *Jevištní* 45.

<sup>36</sup> Kröschlová, *Jevištní* 45.

### **3.2.1. The Visi-Battle**

The visi-battle, also known as the visible-nonvisible game or simply the visibility game, was one of the first exercises introduced to us in the first semester of the first program year in **TM**. This exercise is extremely simple in its essence, but at the same time gives students a thorough introduction to the basic principles of how to perceive and work in/with space.

The goal of this exercise is to either at one time be visible to the audience or to be invisible. The visi-battle can be played in different variations. We performed them through the period of four class sessions.

The very first version was tried out with two people going in the middle of the space and simply competing who will be more visible. Any movement was allowed, but you were forbidden to speak. Then, the task changed – one person had the goal to be visible and the other to be invisible. Partners always exchanged roles, so that everyone would experience trying to be visible and invisible. The second time we tried out the exercise we included the voice. We also started to put three people in the space and tried different combinations of how many are visible and how many invisible.

What I always appreciate in our movement classes at KATaP is the emphasis on **observing** other students doing the exercise while you rest and **give feedback** on what you have seen. In many cases, it is just as important to watch and comment on as it is to do the exercise. This way you manage to see what works and what doesn't work, you learn from other people's mishaps as well as recognize your own.

Very quickly the entire class started to realize that in the visibility game it is not only about the size of the movement or the loudness of the voice, but that **positioning, rhythm** and **timing** play a major role in whether one becomes visible or invisible. One of the first comments I received was that I try too hard and move too much which is soon perceived as repetition and thus the audience gets bored. I was also too within myself and did not pay attention to what my partner was doing. It's necessary to keep one eye on your partner, because the both of you create the dynamics within the space. By realizing what your partner

is doing you can react appropriately to become visible, for example – repeat your partner’s movement or start to follow your partner to steal attention.

The third variation of this exercise was about exploring eye focus and the integration in the space.

1. First, you went into the space alone and found three different places, where you felt comfortable. For each spot, you developed one gesture.
2. Then two people went into the space. They started in one of their spots and performed the gesture. The others observed who is more visible. The pair moved to another spot when Petra clapped with her hands.
3. In the next try, we forgot about the gestures and places and simply competed who will be more visible as we did in the first version of this exercise.

By exploring separate places in the space new dimension start to open. Now, it is not only about the movement and timing, but also recognizing how different **positions in the space** affect your visibility. When two people are in the same line it’s more difficult to gain attention. But if you stand away from the other person or start to experiment with the distance between you and properly time your movement, then the visibility game becomes much more dynamic between the pair. At the same time, we were encouraged to use **eye contact** – either by looking at your partner or by contacting the audience. By looking at your partner you divert the attention towards him or her, by contacting the audience you remind them of your presence and if the two partners look at each other they will both be noticed in the same amount.

The last variation of the visibility game experimented with **walking** – how different ways of walking makes you visible in the space. Similar to before, a constant repetitive movement makes you less and less visible. Changing the tempo-rhythm of your walk, making stops and changing the shape of your walk are all tools to catch people’s attention.

After working on the visibility game for a month I started to develop better sensitivity towards my presence in the space and how much attention I was receiving from the audience. Throughout the next months, I managed to develop the skill to evaluate my actions in the space by looking at them from an outside

point of view. This was not only triggered by TM classes, but also by the constant progression of **Dialogical Acting** classes, where we were constantly given instruction to look at our actions on the stage from an outside point of view and to comment on them.

### **3.2.2. Moving Within a Group**

In all our movement classes the majority of exercises were done by the entire group of students using the space. These include: walking, working with the floor, initiating the movement from your pelvis or other body parts, the impulse exercise, the layers exercise, partnering and boot-camp exercise plus many more. As students, we became used to working and moving in the space while sharing it with others. This greatly influenced our space sensitivity and intuition.

Most of the time we had movement classes in the big dancing hall at DAMU, but in the first program year, TM was taught in a large classroom. In TM the usual size was around 8 students, while in BM numbers could easily fluctuate between 10 to 15 students. The big dancing hall is a generous space (approx.. 150m<sup>2</sup>), thus the described amounts of students working there were not overwhelming.

In the beginning, there were more "accidents" among the students – small bumping-ins into one another, sometimes someone might even fall over another person, but never in the two-years that I remember someone got injured. I believe this is a good representation of how movement was being taught at the department. Emphasis was always made on **maintaining softness** in the body and having **kind attention** towards the others in the room. I remember that in my first semester I was preoccupied with thinking how I looked from the outside and also felt tense because I was scared to bump into someone. The more I became accustomed to our movement classes, the more I managed to turn off my head and simply focus on the task at hand. Especially in exercises where there was constant motion going on for more than 15 minutes, I progressed into a state, where **the body took over**.

Contrary to what people might think, when I say that the body takes over, it does not mean, that a person loses control, quite the opposite. This takes us

back to the subchapter on physical condition, where I mentioned the term **smart body**. As the months progressed I noticed that slowly, but consistently my body started to develop a mind and instincts of its own. If I met someone while moving through the space, instead of freezing and bumping into him or her, I simply turned slightly to the side so that the other person's and my shoulder gently met and we kept moving on, if I was losing balance while doing partnering exercises, instead of becoming even more closed within myself, I engaged my center more to give and receive support and if during a small group etude I would at the start of my studies constantly move around due to nervousness, I would now wait and follow what my colleagues were doing and react at an appropriate moment.

An actor's physical readiness is one of the key topics famous theatre practitioners of the 20<sup>th</sup> century focused on starting with Konstantin Stanislavski followed by Michael Chekhov, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Jerzy Grotowski and Etienne Decroux. Meyerhold defined the actor's readiness and energy as "excitability" – capable of being readily aroused into action.

*"The aim of training [...] is to prepare the actor by creating in him a state of "excitability" which can provoke the correct reflex action: the "point of excitability" is like a car whose engine is idling: press the accelerator and the car "realizes" the action, it moves forward. If the actor is without the "excitability" he is like a car whose ignition is switched off: press its accelerator, and nothing happens."<sup>37</sup>*

One of my favorite moments in BM was when in the second semester Michaela alternated the working with the floor exercise by gradually **narrowing down the space** within which we moved. From using the entire ballroom, we narrowed it down to one third and then later we narrowed that third down to another third and repeated the process again. Our eyes stayed closed all the time. Michaela told us in advance what was going to happen, so everyone paid extra attention to maintaining a soft body and to avoid rash, rough movements. What surprised me most was that never during the exercise did I feel cramped or uneasy. And

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<sup>37</sup> Zarrilli, P.B. *Psychophysical Acting: An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski*. 1st ed. New York : Routledge, 2009. 20-21 p. ISBN 978-0-415-33458-7.

when the space was narrowed down for the last time I felt it was much bigger than it actually was and that I was there only with two to three other people. People who watched from the outside explained that it looked like a big mass of bodies interconnected with one another moving as if we were a river.

The described transformation reshapes the relationship between the body and the space. In my personal view, I feel that in such an instance the body suddenly **owns the space** yet, becomes one with it at the same time.

### **3.3. Conclusion**

The division between inner and outer space is necessary to better understand the processes behind each separate concept, because the nature of each is very different. Yet, both concepts together compose the topic of space as we have examined and were discovering in our movement classes.

By going into an in-depth analysis of the topic of space, I realized that for me it is easier to discuss inner than outer space. It's possible that this happened due to our department's special attention on the individual through psychosomatic techniques. My way of thinking is thus influenced by the way topics are being taught at our department. It is easier for me to recognize the processes and changes happening inside of me.

Another reason might also be that the topic of outer space is more abstract or at least, in my opinion, it offers endless possibilities of discussion. There are very clear and precise theories dealing with space especially in mathematics, physics, architecture and even art. An important concept that comes to mind is the theory of the Golden Ratio. In mathematical terms, the Golden Ratio is a special number found by dividing a line into two parts so that the longer part divided by the smaller part is equal to the whole length divided by the longer part. It's commonly symbolized by the Greek letter Pi ( $\pi$ ).<sup>38</sup> The Golden Ratio has inspired many artists especially painters like Leonardo Da Vinci (think of the famous *Vitruvian Man* drawing) and is commonly used by choreographers either when

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<sup>38</sup> Horn, E. J. What is the Golden Ratio? [online]. 2013 [cit. 2018-03-09]. Accessed from: <<https://www.livescience.com/37704-phi-golden-ratio.html>>.



they think of space division, positioning of the dancers and the dance movement itself or simply as an inspirational theme.<sup>39</sup>

At KATaP we do not go into details about the laws which govern outside space or the empty stage. A student's sensitivity to the space around him is built by repeating exercises connected to the topic. This again shows the department's emphasis on developing concrete skills through non-direct ways. At the same time, I believe that proper control and awareness of one's inner space is mandatory towards conquering the outer space as both concepts are constantly intertwined.

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<sup>39</sup> Galloway, R. The Golden Ratio: Rosas gives us a masterclass in proportion and timing [online]. 2017 [cit. 2018-03-09]. Accessed from: <<https://bachtrack.com/review-rosas-rain-theatre-maisonneuve-montreal-may-2016>>.

#### 4. FROM IMAGINATION TO CREATION

I regard the final chapter on imagination as a natural procession of the previous two chapters. I started the thesis by writing about posture and remained more within the purely physical aspects of our training. Proceeding on to space, I stretched out the topic of movement outside the biomechanics of the body to give it a new dimension. Already in the chapter of space, I spoke about one's perception and sensitivity of the surroundings by exploring it through the body. This final chapter is about combining the activities of the mind and the body and exploring their relationship.

Let's come back to an important statement from the introduction - **there exists a natural link between the body and the mind. When properly connected, such a union gives way to a powerful force of creativity.** For me, this statement was already confirmed before my AA studies based on simple everyday observations. I am stressed because of exams, I get sick – the body follows the mind. Or, I go for a run after studying all day, I feel refreshed and active – the mind follows the body.

It's not a surprise that such a basic principle can also be applied to acting methods. The term "**psychophysical acting**" is used by the contemporary theatre theoretician Phillip B. Zarrilli in his book *Psychophysical Acting - An Intercultural Approach After Stanislavski*. The book is a detail exploration of movement exercises for actors and how they influence the actor's imagination and performance on stage. Zarrilli is in no means taking all the credit in claiming he invented a new method in the theatre world. On the contrary, he constantly quotes and finds the basis for his work from famous theatre minds such as Stanislavski, Chekhov, Meyerhold, Grotowski and Barba as well as examines the benefits of the Asian theatre arts and their approach towards the physical.

Zarilli negates the Cartesian dualism between the mind and the body: "... the imagination is too often considered to be simply an image conceived of as something *in* the mind,"<sup>40</sup> He insists that an actor must know how to imagine through his or her entire body, to "think with the body". This is only possible if

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<sup>40</sup> Zarrilli 39.

the actor is sufficiently trained through psychophysical disciplines. Through various movement exercises and movement disciplines such as yoga and Tai Chi Zarilli believes that the body has its own way of thinking and just as our mind, it is able to create “perceptual content” through physical experience.<sup>41</sup>

Similar to Zarilli, I have come to my own realization that purely psychological exploration of a play and character gets you only so far. If I really wish to create a more full and layered character on stage, then exploring its traits through the physical can be extremely rewarding. In the next subchapters, I have chosen to write about three exercises, which show the impressive correlation between the body and the mind: **playing with hands**, **doing animals** and **becoming sand**. These exercises stand out from the others described in this thesis, because their final goal was already coming close to creating a more fixed structure.

#### **4.1. Playing with Hands**

At the beginning of the second semester in TM we started with one of the most significant class topics – exploring hands. Similar to other topics, the hands' exercise has many different variations.

First class session – the **four basic temperaments**: sanguine, choleric, melancholic and phlegmatic. The aim is to show one temperament only with the movement of your hand.

1. You work in pairs. One person sits on the chair while the other observes.
2. The person who is sitting on the chair has his or her eyes covered. With one hand he or she starts to play one of the above temperaments as instructed by Petra before the start.
3. When the person finishes, the pair switches positions. The one who was observing repeats what the partner was doing.
4. The exercise is repeated until everyone has done both – playing and observing.

One of the first comments from Petra after this exercise was that normal, human-like gestures do not work. For instance: touching your knee, touching

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<sup>41</sup> Zarilli 49.

your head, waving – anything that reminds the audience of an ordinary gesture. Same goes for cliché moves, like shaking with your fists. I started to understand that the goal of this exercise is to find **new ways of expression** by going into an extreme exploration of your hand movement. In a way, you need to forget that it is your hand, forget how and why you normally use your hand, but let yourself loose in its anatomical abilities by discovering all its bones and muscles, how it flexes and extends. It was great to watch other people and get ideas about how to use your hand, which I would usually never think of.

Similar to the visi-battle, we quickly realized that **rhythm** plays an important part when making a small hand etude. Because of nervousness, I was constantly moving my hand, which started to bore the audience. If you maintain the same rhythm and do not include any stop times then it stops being interesting.

Another important element is to think about the **space** around you. As soon as someone started to use the space in front, above, on the sides and even at the back of his or her body, it gave the etude a totally new dimension.

Why were our eyes covered? An important topic of this exercise was recognizing **neutral posture** and **facial expression**. I received comments from Petra not to rest with my back on the chair, but to move forward with my back straightened. At the same time, I should be careful not to lean too forward with my shoulders. Moving my collar bone a bit back, helped with that. Maintaining neutral posture and facial expression is necessary to not use excess energy, but to purely focus all your energy and emotions in the hands. Only this way you can realize your full body potential.

Second class session – working with **word associations**.

Instead of working with the four temperaments Petra gave us words for associations such as desire, starvation, despair etc. Now we were allowed to use both hands, but we still remained to have our eyes covered and were not allowed to speak.

Working with **two hands** created a big challenge for me, because suddenly you had to coordinate two not just one body part. At the same time, this is a great exercise for your brain. Two hands give you much more possibility of expression.

You can use the hands simultaneously by both doing the same movement or each hand does its own set of movements. You can also use one and then switch to the other.

In comparison to the previous session, I decided to go slow and take my time. I realized, that because my eyes were covered I needed time to decide in my mind what I was going to do and then I slowly experimented with different types of movements recognizing what works and what doesn't work. In this way, a type of **dialogue** developed **between my mind and my hands**.

### Third class session – telling a **story**.

We worked in pairs and had our eyes open.

1. One person made up a story and had the task of showing the story with both of his or her hands.
2. The other helped the storyteller to direct the story while rehearsing the small etude.
3. Then the storyteller showed the story to the students.
4. The pair switched roles and repeated the same procedure as before.

The major difference between this exercise and all those before was that we had to develop a story with clear characters, surroundings and story. I made up a simple tale. I started with the picture of the sea and then fish swimming in the water. Then a fisherman comes by and catches a fish. After a small struggle, the fisherman lets the fish back into the water.

What shocked me most was the clear vision I had in my head and the difficulty conveying that vision into my hands. I was given comments that it's good to use your hands as puppets, but not to forget about showing the emotional state of the characters or the situation. Especially in the beginning, it's better to avoid complex stories and you can try something more abstract, which is funny, because I thought that my story was quite simple. Petra said that it would be enough to show just fish in the sea and focus more on creating a rich scenery and atmosphere.

### Fourth class session – shifting **from movement to words**.

1. You make up a story in your head. You go in front of the students and in a standing position tell the story however you want – using words and hands.
2. You sit on a chair and put your hands behind your back and tell the story only with words.
3. You remain sitting and tell the story only with your hands.
4. You stand up and tell the story again however you want.

One of my favorite memories of TM was performing this exercise. This is what I wrote in my notes soon after the class:

*"4<sup>th</sup> April 2016 - TM*

*Today was fantastic! I do not know what is happening. I think it shows that I have been working with my body and voice a lot and that I am much more sensitive towards everything."*

Similar to before, I chose a story about the sea. First, I imagined a big octopus swimming in the sea and grabbing things around with its tentacles. Then a flock of small fish swims by. A group of medusas slowly move through. Then a storm starts, and big waves form on the sea. A powerful wind starts to play with a ship and people are thrown overboard. A flock of dolphins passes by and one of them takes a person on its back and rescues him to the island shore.

While going through the different stages of telling the story I was surprised by the changes that happened in my body. When I first told the story, I tried not to stress and experimented both with language and body movement – I used onomatopoeic language using sounds as voice effects and supported it with the movement of my hands. When I only told the story with the words, I deliberately took care of losing any excess facial expression and was focused on creating a richer description and to be clearly understood. In the third try with hands, I still had some issues with creating good tempo-rhythm and not repeating the same movement all the time. But the last fourth variation was the biggest surprise. It felt like a big burst of energy. My imagination was working at an extremely high level. Sentences were forming on their own without much prior thought. The story became richer. I didn't only wish to describe what was happening, but also to include more emotions. Another important change I experienced was physical.

I stopped making unnecessary facial expressions and my voice started to become more alive and vivid. I stopped exaggerating with the movement of my hands and let them flow naturally depending on what I was saying.

After discussing these changes with Petra she explained that the hands always held a special place in the area of human expression. Besides the changes in our facial expression, the movement of our hands can just as easily express and help decode a person's emotional state. When we are excited we throw our hands in the air, when we are nervous we start to scratch ourselves and when a person feels sad he or she hides the face behind the hands. But, the process can also work backwards. By telling the story with my hands, the story got imprinted into my mind creating new dimensions and layers to it. That's the reason why the final repetition was the richest and most imaginative.

## **4.2. Doing Animals**

The last topic we worked with in TM in the first program year was animals. I was looking forward to this topic very much, because it's a famous classic in an actor's training and I was curious to explore how my imagination and perception of a certain animal will affect the way I move my body.

Each student explored three different animals. Everyone did the **swan** why the other two were left to our choosing. I chose **the doe** and **the lion**.

### **4.2.1. The Swan**

The first animal we got acquainted with was **the swan**. This animal was performed by all the students and we were perfecting it throughout four class sessions. Everyone had the task to show the transition from baby swan to an adult animal - only through movement. What was crucial here and emphasized on Petra's side was to make clear differentiations between the separate stages of the swan's physical development as well as finding places of transitions between these stages. We discussed and thought about in detail which stages these are exactly:

1. The baby swan in the egg.

2. The baby swan hatching out of its egg
3. The baby swan coming out of the egg and slowly making its first steps.
4. The baby swan transitioning into a young swan discovering its wings.
5. A young swan slowly spreading its wings and walking more.
6. A young swan transitioning into an adult swan fully extending and using its wings and legs.

Two clear creative phases were going on at the same time – one was **purely physical** and the other was about **using your imagination**. The exercise was done by three people going to the middle of the classroom in a common line, while the others watched.



Source: Yedraw, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, accessed from:  
<<http://www.yedraw.com/how-to-draw-swan.html#.W41mzLh9jIU>>.

The evolution of the swan started by lying on the floor in a fetal position with our back to the audience. In the first two class session, we used a lot of time to achieve a **neutral lying position** – that there is almost a straight line running along the side of your body. This was achieved by not letting your pelvis slouch inside, but slightly lifting it up to straightening your back. Your lower hand was tucked in so that only the shoulder was visible and you made sure to align the upper shoulder, creating a straight and flat upper back. By constantly correcting and finding ways to the neutral position, I was able to realize my posture habits – winged-out shoulder blades and tucked-in pelvis. The neutral position is very



important for creating a character. By recognizing and fixing your bad posture habits to achieve a neutral position you are then able to create any kind of character by simply pasting on different posture and movement traits.

From lying still on the floor I started to imagine the awakening of the baby swan. First I did this simply by deeper breathing so that my body started to rise and fall. Petra also emphasized that it brought a more human-like character into the animal and liveliness. Then I started with miniature movements all around my body – the shoulders, arms, pelvis, legs, feet, head and chest. I got a comment that the first time this was done, it was too automatic. I should help myself with the image of a struggling baby swan which is using its body for the first time and is trying to push its limbs out of the egg. This calls for clumsier and not so fluent movement.

The next important phase was to find a way from the lying to a kneeling position. I intensified the movement and started to make slightly bigger moves. After a couple of tries, I managed to lift the trunk of my body and sat on my heels in a kneeling position. Now, I have become the young swan.

The young swan's task was to discover its wings. It does not know yet how to fly. That's why I imagined a lot of flapping going on. It was important not to rush too quickly with the extension of your arms, but first to work with a flexed arm, moving your elbow into different directions. At the same time, it's important not to forget about other parts of your body. After the comments, I realized that I totally forgot about the moving of the neck and the head, which are important features of the swan. In the next class session, I tried being more aware of this.

Together with the flapping of the hands the young swan tries to get up. I initiated this by moving my torso up and down until I manage to free one of my legs and raise my foot on to the ground, but the knee is bent in a 90-degree angle. This is a crucial moment for the young swan, because it's a very unstable position. I needed to find the right amount of strength to pull out the other leg and slowly raise my entire body. What helped me a lot was the image of the young swan trying to use its wings. All the movements of the torso and legs were supported by the flapping of my hands. I imagined that just as the swan, I

was lifting myself up by moving the air around me with the wings. That's why when I lifted myself up from the ground my arms finally extended.

The next phase is the transition from the young to the adult swan. Though I came into standing position, I remained to have my body a bit slouched. Again, I gave focus to the new quality of my wings. I discovered and started to enjoy the newly attained freeness in my arms and only when I felt that I have gained confidence and proper elegance in my swing, I slowly started to walk forward with my head fully lifted and became the adult swan.

It took several tries to figure out all the details of the swan etude. For me, there still existed a problem of conveying the image which I had in my mind on to the movement. Petra urged us to work more with the **emotions** that accompany the transformation – feelings of struggle, curiosity and the final glorious nature of the adult swan. This helped me to differentiate between the development stages of the animal so that in each stage the quality of my movement was different.

Another important aspect was creating good **tempo-rhythm** throughout the entire etude. As usual, in the first tries, my movement was too legato and had the same rhythm. This not only took the audience's interest away, but also caused my movement to have the same quality all the time. I realized that playing with different rhythms in my movement helped me to convey the message. As a baby swan, my moves were faster, shorter and not well connected – it was more of a staccato rhythm. When I transitioned into an adult swan I attained a slower and more fluent rhythm to emphasize the elegance of the swing. I also realized that my body and the audience responded better to the transitional phases when I made a short stop between the breakthrough moments such as when the baby swan lifts its torso, when the young swan makes its first step and when it stands up. What helped us with finding good tempo-rhythm of the story was also **music**. In the third class session we each brought our own music to match the etude. The specific melody and mood of the song helped us with creating an emotional power as well as structuring the etude within a precise timeline.

One of the key-outcomes of this exercise for me was to realize how the characteristics of the swan can stay within your body. When we reached the end

of the room as an adult swan, we had the task to come back to our normal human state, turn around and walk back to our chair. I felt completely different than usual. My chest was extremely open and my gaze was straight holding a sense of power. This made a great effect on me and for the first time, I realized how the body can substantially affect a person's character. We continued with this exploration further on with other animals.

#### **4.2.2. The Doe and the Lion**

While still working with swans we started to explore other animals. Each student had the liberty to choose two animals, but the rule was that they should represent his or her personality. One animal would be your normal-day you and the other your alter ego. I chose the doe to represent my everyday personality and the lion as my alter ego.

This exercise was a good continuation of the work we started with swans, because more emphasis was made on the **relationship between the human and animalistic traits of a character**. In the first class session, we only did our **everyday animal**.

1. Everyone goes into the space as the animal he or she has chosen and moves freely around.
2. Then you slowly stand up and start walking as that animal.
3. You switch into a human being, but keep the animal inside of you.
4. After the group session, two people went to the end of the classroom into two parallel lines. They started walking as the human being with the animal inside of them and stopped twice by making a pose. During the entire time, Petra also clapped and the person had to change from the human being to the animal.

In the second class session, we did the same with our **alter ego animal**.

I found it very funny when people commented in the first class session that my doe was actually a lion, because I moved a lot with my hips and shoulders. Petra told us to closely observe the animal via video footage. When I tried again the next time I needed Petra's outside eye to help me adjust my body. It's true that **the doe** is elegant, but it was necessary to make the movement stiffer and more

straight-like, that's why I adjusted and raised my neck. We also discovered a nice detail with my palm – when I was on all fours I only used three fingers to resemble the hoof of a doe. Then we spoke about the dynamics of the doe's movement. It's a very shy and quiet animal. It can easily eat grass for a longer period of time and be completely still, but if it gets scared-off it will quickly run away.



Source: Clker, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018, accessed from:  
<<http://www.clker.com/clipart-183895.html>>

I had similar problems inhibiting the movement of **the lion**. I was too stiff and heavy. I always saw the animal as this big massive cat, which moves heavily with its hips and shoulders. But after discussing it with Petra in greater detail, I realized that a cat's main trait is to work gently with the floor, never making any sound. Once I became more flexible with my spine, to swing my body gently from side to side, I managed to transfer the weight more upwards.

Why is it so important to **think about every single physical aspect** of the animal? I discovered that the more I embodied an animal's physical traits the more I manage to forget about my own human characteristics and adopt the personality of the animal. When starting the animal exercise I mostly relied on my own perception of the animal's emotional state and character – the doe is shy and the lion is vicious. But does images only helped me with the movement to a certain degree. First, I needed to forget my own movement habits and experiment with the body in totally new ways. When I managed to conquer the physical characteristics of the doe, its personality traits started to become more

visible and I could start to improvise with them. This became most evident for me when I was doing the doe. The innocent and half-frightened look in the doe's eyes started gaining much better context when I stood still for a couple of seconds observing the space around me and then suddenly rushed away as if I just heard a sound only to look up again after I found a new safe spot. If I would only rely on the gaze and embody the physical traits badly, there would be no effect and all I would be left with would be **stereotypes** and **clichés**.

I really appreciated that while working with animals Petra's motivation was not only for us to adopt pure animalistic behavior and movement, but to experiment with these traits in combination with the human body. By switching from an animal to a person with the animal inside of him or her, a totally new dimension of creating a character opened up for me. I realized that sometimes I needn't think about the psychological aspect of a character, but that I can start with the physical traits and the emotions will follow.

### **4.3. Becoming Sand**

The sand exercise at BM in the second semester of the second program year was for me one of the most defying moments in my movement education. When I think of Jiří Lössl and BM I think of the sand exercise. The reason why I have such fond memories of this task is, because I believe that it was one of the first moments that all the movement education I have received started coming together.

The exercise is split into two parts. In the first part, you are alone working with the image of sand surrounding your body. In the second part, you work in pairs where one imagines that he or she *is* sand.

#### First part:

1. You start by lying on the floor. Imagine that you are lying on the beach on the dry, warm sand. Scan your body and think about what kind of imprint you are making in the sand.
2. Slowly start to move and arrive at a new position. Again, think about the imprint you are leaving in the sand. Continue with the change in positions.

3. After a while, speed-up your movement and continue in the same task as before. Think about how you are pushing and shifting the sand around your body.
4. Slowly move into a mid-level position and imagine that the wind is lifting the sand up from the floor and surrounding your body.
5. After a while come to a standing position and move around the space on your two feet.

For me, the key to really enjoy and feel that you are doing this exercise right is the vivid image of the sand that Jiří was describing to us. The circumstances could not be plainer – the floor of the ballroom is cold and covered with black PVC dance flooring, the space around us is big and the ceiling is high covered in gold baroque ornaments. I know this space well and it is nothing like a hot sandy beach. But by letting my mind wander into the described image, I forgot where I really was. I truly believed I was creating imprints on the sand and with each stroke I made with my hand or leg, I could feel the tiny, fluid sand particles slipping through my fingers. The more I moved with the image of the surrounding sand in my mind, the more vivid the picture would become. I started seeing the entire beach in front of me, the position of the sun and its white blazing gaze. The landscape was vast and there was no one in sight. Looking back on it now, it feels that my movement started to take over and influence my mind, opposite to how the exercise actually started.

Similar as in the playing with paper exercise, the quality of my movement changed based on the image in my mind. I was moving more fluently, imagining that the wind is tossing and turning me together with the sand. This also encouraged the birth of many surprising moments – without consciously planning, there were times when my body would suddenly change direction or I gently fell on the floor, because I felt that a sudden strong wind blew me away.

After reflecting and sharing our impressions in the group we proceeded on to the second part:

1. You go into pairs. One person is standing while the other gently presses with his or her palm on various parts of the partner's body.  
The one who is receiving the impulse imagines that his or her entire body is made out of sand. When receiving the touch, he or she moves with the

notion of shifting all the sand in the body towards the spot that was touched.

2. The pair starts moving in the space, doing the same as before.  
The one who is touching can slightly speed-up the pace, but he or she must make sure to follow the natural flow of the partner's body.
3. After a while the one who is touching moves away and observes the other person who continues to move around the space with the same image and quality of the movement as before.

Though the instruction may sound easy, this was one of the hardest tasks I had to do during my studies. First, Jiří was not happy with what we were showing I and stopped us to repeat the instruction and demonstrate how it should look like. After that, I started to rethink the way I was doing the exercise. I stopped relying on my bones and muscles and simply immersed myself into the image of an hourglass. Each time my partner would touch me on a new spot I imagined the turning of an hourglass and the sand quickly pouring from one glass bulb to the other. I transmitted this image into my body and supported it by producing a feeling of extra weight in my muscles making the movement slower and heavier. In this way, the person observing from outside perceived the movement as if something was truly passing through my body.

I believe it was necessary to do the first part of the exercise in order to perform the second. Why? Because I perceive it as a play and dialogue between the emotional and physical memory. My body started to move based on the images and emotions that the mind kept supplying. Then through the movement, the body started to influence my imagination and what I was seeing in my mind. Working with the impression of sand, how it moves through the space, how it feels when being touched was crucial in capturing the exact image of sand and transmitting it into my body.

#### **4.4. Conclusion**

Where is the border between imagination and creation? This is a question that goes through my mind, when looking at the above-described exercises from the outside. When did the moment of decision occur that I shifted my body due to

the feeling of strong wind - was it decided unconsciously in my mind before I executed the turn? Because I am almost certain that I did not make up the image in my mind prior.

I believe, that this **unconscious – conscious dialogue between imagination and creation** is something every actor and artist aspires to achieve. When it happens, the person is actually aware of its power, even though he or she might not be able to explain where it comes from. During my studies, I've realized that good physical condition and keeping up with psychophysical exercises enables me to have an open creative flow.

Thinking about the two years of my studies and exploring the exercises through this thesis, I realized what a big change has happened in my attitude towards *creating*. Today, I am much more at ease when I start rehearsing for a small etude or a solo piece. Instead of planning everything ahead and writing it down, I am prone to experiment with a specific scene and start from the abstract to later discover the concrete.

This would not be possible without the approach our movement teachers at KATaP encourage. It was only on rare occasions that we prepared a fixed etude, usually for klauzury and even then the exercises are set in a way that there's always room for improvisation. A creation does not necessarily mean something fixed and done as Jiří Lössl once said: "You never know what will happen, but something will be created."



## 5. CONCLUSION

To fully understand the methods and goals that govern movement education at KATaP it's necessary to understand the principles which the department stands by and is known for. The most important feature of KATaP is the psychosomatic approach of teaching and studying. Movement, as well as other practical subjects, such as voice and speech, are taught through the emphasis on personal awareness and exploration. In such a way each student will experience different challenges and stages of personal transformation during his or her studies.

Such personal development is duly encouraged and desired by the teachers. At KATaP no standard methods of acting are employed during class as would be accustomed in more classical oriented acting schools. This is the heritage which comes from the methods and teachings of prof. Ivan Vyskočil, the founder of the department. Students are not encouraged to *act* in the traditional sense of the word or to inhabit and emerge themselves into a *character*. Authorial acting students gather material for their stage work from personal themes and stories. Students stand behind their work as authors and creators not running away from their personalities but discovering how to engage them in a performance situation.

If you keep this in mind, the layout and goals of movement education at KATaP gain much better context. How come you will not find tap dance or ballet classes at the department? In my opinion, such classes would not greatly benefit an individual's personal development. Though the disciplines would undoubtedly benefit the student's sense for rhythm, posture and flexibility, I still regard the training as pasting a codified set of movements on to the individual. In this way, the student does not have control over what is going on inside and outside his or her body, but merely becomes a tool.

Personally, I always had problems with learning dances which included a lot of steps and complicated choreography. Before starting my AA studies I never considered myself a dancer. But today I can confidently say that I have no fear of joining a contemporary dance workshop with people who have more experience than I and I believe this is due to the training I have received.

In the July 2017 I attended an international summer theatre school in Russia, where the movement workshops were led by a young contemporary dancer and choreographer. There were eighty young theatre professionals participating as students and during class I realized that most of them had no prior experience with the introduced movement methods. The exercises and principles were much similar to what we do in BM and I had few problems executing them. But through repetition and good guidance most of the students quickly caught up.

I believe the above example is proof that the movement classes and teaching methods at KATaP are by no means absolute or out of the ordinary, but in line with current theatre trends. An additional supporting factor that movement at KATaP is taught by respecting the body's natural abilities and boundaries is based on the fact that my fellow summer school students didn't need a lot of time to conquer the newly introduced exercises.

Making a final revision, this thesis helps to enlighten the logic behind the way how our classes are structured and work with each other. Michaela warmed up our bodies and made us strong, so we could use them in a more descriptive context with Petra. While in the second program year, Jiří's BM combines both aspects. It would be impossible or at least useless to perform the sand exercise in the first year, because our bodily sensitivity would not be trained well enough and the flow between the body and the mind would not be open.

Now, the question that opens up for me is – Where to go on from here? How will I maintain the knowledge I have gained on my own? This is, of course, tough to answer, as nothing in life is certain. But, by asking myself such a question, I have already answered it in part. My wish not only to continue, but to develop even more in my movement education and exploration of its relationship with performance creation, will push me forward to the place I wish to go. It is, much as it was during my studies, up to me to decide what to do and be responsible for that decision. The body will follow the mind. Or, it might be that the body has already persuaded the mind.

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