

MOVING

ON

HORSES

*Certificate Project of
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*Laban Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies
Intensive Program 1999/2000
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INTRODUCTION

The idea for this project was born in summer 1999 when I had the first deep contact with the Laban material and the Bartenieff Fundamentals. I was curious if LMA would be useful for working with people who do acrobatics on a cantering horse. "Vaulting" is my most beloved sport since I was 6 years old and in recent years I have been fascinated by developing a way to "dance" on the horse. So I thought that the system of LMA may provide a different view of this kind of movements which I already know for years.

Because my profession as a Physical Therapist is to work in a therapeutic situation and my desire is to widen my spectrum to coaching for sports and dance I decided to have a teaching project instead of working with myself.

I chose Lena Zimmermann, a 14 year-old girl who is not one of my students. She is training in another group but I saw her vaulting from time to time throughout the last 2 or 3 years. She was one of the good, smaller vaulters in a good competition group. She always belonged to the type of vaulters with great bodily strength and straightness compared to the type of very flexible and more hypotonic girls. In the last 1 1/2 years she became more rigid in her joints and less flexible in her movements, and the level of her performance stopped improving. She had different coaches who always ended up telling her that she has to be softer in her movements and more flexible without being able to tell her *how* to do it.

I observed this situation and always thought that we have to find a different way to work with her than the standard training methods. These are mainly

based on telling the students *what* they have to do and not *how*, and on copying the other vaulters. I wished to have a different language for Lena (and for many others too!).

So I decided to try out if LMA might be a good language for me to understand what Lena's body is telling me and for her to understand what I want to tell her.

THE PROJECT

The project contains the following steps:

- 1- I videotaped Lena doing her Compulsories and Kür to show her "before" baseline.
- 2- I analyzed her movements.
- 3- I watched and analyzed "professional" vaulters.
- 4- I did five sessions with Lena off the horse.
- 5- I videotaped her "after" baseline on the horse.
- 6- I did one coaching session on the horse.

The accompanying videotape has the following listed sections that relate to the discussion in the paper:

- 1) Lena vaulting in November (the "before" tape)
 - a) compulsory sequence filmed from inside of the circle
 - b) Kür from inside
 - c) Kür from outside
 - d) Compulsories from outside

2) The world champions, Compulsories

Georg Rosenberger

Kai Vorberg

Fabian Köngeter

Kerrith Lemon

Janine Oswald

Nadia Zülow

3) Classes with Lena

a) waves and water, 2x

b) shaping thorax

c) snail movements with legs

d) swinging around, sitting

e) punch with pelvis

4) Lena, second session on horse (the "after" tape)

a) Compulsories filmed from inside of the circle

b) Kür from inside

c) Kür from outside

d) Compulsories from outside

5) Introducing Felix

6) Coaching session on horse

a) Mill training

b) Mill

c) swing for Scissors

d) Scissors and swing backwards

e) Kür, first exercise

f) flag sideways

g) prince kneeling

ANALYSIS OF LENAS COMPULSORIES

We started in November 1999 with the videotaping of Lena's compulsory sequence and a little phrase of self-developed free exercises, the Kür. She showed the Kür on the walking horse and the Compulsories in gallop, like they are shown on a regular competition. She did the vaulting on Anatevka, our senior mare, a horse which she has known for years.

My stress would be on the work with the Compulsories but I wanted to give her the possibility to play with creative movements as well. Therefore I did not analyze her Kür but I only picked a few details to underpin my statements.

In vaulting, the horse walks counterclockwise on a circular pathway. It is led by somebody holding a longe, standing in the middle of the circle.

For the analysis of the facts of Space Harmony I used two different systems of reference. If not differently indicated I used the Standard system of reference. I often refer to facing the inside or outside of the circle, which does relate to left and right side of the horse. The second system is the "standard system for the horse". Gravity line remains up and down, forward-back relates to the head and tail of the horse and to the direction of it's travelling and side-side relates to the left and right side of the horse.

This is the analysis of Lenas Compulsories:

1: BASIC SEAT

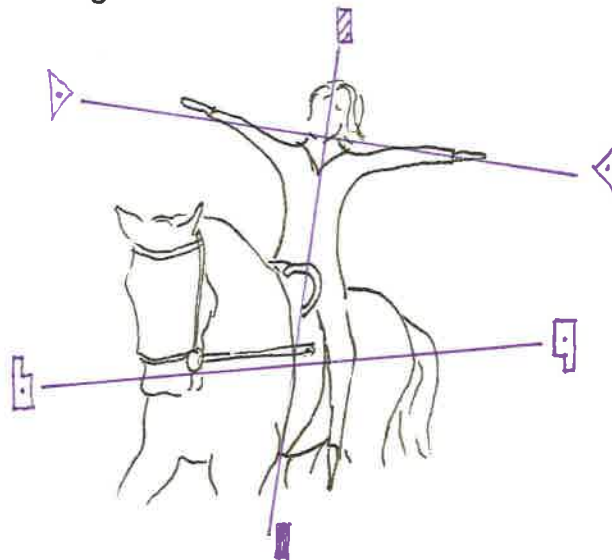
1) She sits astride holding the surcingle grips, the lower legs are in contact with the horse, the toes point downwards.

2) She releases the surcingle grips and unfolds the arms transversely to her sides into the horizontal dimension.

3) The position with stretched out arms side-side with fingertips in line with her eyes and palms pointing downwards is held for four canter strides.

Together with the horse she is making an octahedral form:






4) She lowers her arms and retakes the surcingle grips.






#2: FLAG


1) Sit astride, short swing forward with the lower legs, led by the feet.

2) Legs swing backwards, feet land on the horseback and the pelvis is pushed up so that she ends kneeling on the horse, hands still on grips.

3) From the position on hands / knees / lower legs / feet she stretches out the right leg backwards and the left arm forwards. At the same time her left leg turns outward so that the lower leg now lays diagonally from  to  in the horizontal plane on the horseback. Position in Space: the right leg goes to back middle () with a gestural movement in Spoke-like Directional Shape Change (), ending with maximal extension in the hip, knee and foot. The left arm describes a gestural pathway to forward middle () where the shoulderjoint stays in about 170° extension (and the shouldergirdle stays fixated in its used position) so that she does not reach the maximal range of motion in the arm.

The torso is tilted forward () as before at the end of #2, but stretches out, the head is up () and she faces forward ().

4) While she holds the position four canter strides she twists her pelvis a little and the left foot does not stay in firm contact to the horseback.



5) The left hand leads back to the grip with a flexion in the shoulderjoint. Simultaneously, the right foot leads the leg down to place low () with a flexion and a slight abduction in the hip.

6) The weight is transfered to the arms and the left hip is rotating back to neutral so that the left lower leg moves clockwise in the horizontal plane. When it reaches the sagittal dimension, the knee extends and the foot points to place low.

7) The body is symmetric again. The stretched out legs slide down along the

horse and the weight is transferred back to the sitzbones. The knees flex slightly and the lower legs adapt in a gestural movement to the horse.

#3: MILL

1) From seat astride, the right foot leads the leg, on a circular pathway, high up over the horse's neck and down to the left side of the horse where it lays next to the left leg in contact to the horse, toes pointing downwards. She uses mostly Shape Flow (), alternating with some moments of Arc-like Directional Shape Change (). When the leg passes the arms they release the surcingle grips for a moment. While the leg is moving, the upper body makes a quarter turn to the left so that she ends up sitting sideways, facing right forward.

2) The left foot leads the leg on a circular pathway over the croup to the outside of the horse, the upper body makes a quarter twist to the left. Then she changes again the grips so that she ends up untwisted and sitting facing backwards on the horse.

3) She repeats the circling sequence with the right leg, but she ends up sitting sideways to the outside of the circle. At this point she is sliding on the horseback and is already turning the body forward toward the head of the horse.

4) She completes the sequence by circling the left leg over the horse's neck and ends up sitting astride, facing forward.

Each of the four phases of this exercise takes four canter strides.

#4: SCISSORS

1) From sitting astride she swings both legs forward, knees and feet stretched out, with about 70° flexion in the hipjoints. Gaze forward, upper body contracts into flexion.

2) Swing legs back-high:

The upper body bends down to forward low on the right side of the horses neck, arms are bent while the legs move to place low and then to back-high, supported by the center of weight shifting towards back-high. The body moves in the sagittal plane towards verticality, but upside down, while the arms, supporting the weight of the body, stretch out more.

At the highest point the left leg, led by the foot, crosses behind the right leg and shows a curved gestural pathway with extended hip while the right leg crosses forward, mostly with a flexion in the hipjoint and a more straight pathway down to the left side of the horse, making the pelvis turn counterclockwise around the vertical axis.

While the body moves down with the front of the pelvis pointing to the inside of

the circle, the feet move towards place low and the right hip goes from flexion into extension when the thigh touches the horse. The lower body is sitting backwards while the shoulders still twist to the right. She releases the grips so that the upper body turns counterclockwise around the vertical axis and returns to an untwisted state. The gaze is backwards on the horse.

Efforts used in 2): Strong and Quick (fighting Rhythm State) into Strong and Bound (Dream State) into Free Flow with Heavy Weight:



3) She sits backwards on the horse, hands behind her on the grips again. The legs enclose the body of the horse.

4) Both legs stretch out quickly to the vaulters back low with extended knees and hyperextension in the hips while upper body points to back high and the pelvis pushes forward and gets lifted up from the horseback.

5) The legs swing through side low to the vaulters forward high with a quick core initiation. When the legs are horizontal the arms start pulling the body back over the grips. The swing of the legs pulls the trunk upwards so that the pelvis is lifted away from the horseback while the legs are pointing to forward high.

At about the highest point, the left leg starts crossing the right one in front with a curved gestural pathway and the right leg crosses behind the left one, extending in the hipjoint while the left leg stays in flexion. Then the pelvis starts turning clockwise.

The turn of the pelvis and the legs is nearly completed when she comes back to sitting forward. Then she removes first the left hand then the right one from the grips to be able to complete the turn in the upper body. Looking forward, she retakes the grips and closes the legs around the body of the horse.

#5: STAND

- 1) She swings the legs forward, then back and up to come into a kneeling position as described in the Flag.
- 2) She jumps onto her feet with gaze forward: the pelvis gives an impulse to back high, the weight shifts on the hands, the pelvis moves to back high while the shoulder joints extend, the hips flex and the knees extend to prepare for landing softly with the feet on the horseback.
- 3) She shifts the weight to the feet, releases the grips simultaneously and moves the body towards verticality. The knees stay as much flexed as it is useful to absorb the rocking motion of the horse and they keep their flexibility in the sagittal plane together with the hips and the ankles.
- 4) While arriving at the vertical axis with the trunk, the arms start moving to the side, led by the hands. The fingertips of the stretched out arms hold level with her eyes, palms down. This is an octahedral form again.

5) This position is held for four canter strides.

6) She lowers her arms to bring the hands back to forward low to the surcingle grips. To allow this movement the hips, knees and ankles flex and the upper body bends down, still looking forward.

7) She retakes the grips and transfers the weight to the hands. There is a slight abduction in the hips and with toes pointing downwards she slides with both legs down the sides of the horse and comes back to sitting astride, legs in contact with the horse.

She mainly uses Bound Flow Effort with diminished Direct Space().

#6: FLANK

1) After a short impulse backwards Lena swings both legs forwards to gain momentum while contracting the upper body into flexion.

2) Like in the Scissors she swings the legs back high and the pelvis is lifted up into the air so that the whole stretched-out body is supported by her arms. The legs stay slightly opened.

3) At the highest point she flexes both hips while the pelvis turns slightly to the left. Both feet describe a curved pathway from back high to left low while the legs

slide down on the left side of the horse.

4) When the side of the right thigh touches the horse, the pelvis completes the quarter turn around its vertical axis to the left so that both sitzbones get in contact to the horseback. The shouldergirdle and head face left forward middle of the horse and the lower legs lie next to the horse, while the pelvis is facing the inside of the circle.

5) In the following I use the horse's system of reference for Space.

She swings the stretched out legs together to left forward middle to gain momentum, then she swings them low and back while turning the pelvis so that it faces front again so that she does not hit the horse with her legs. Through the turn of the pelvis the swinging legs can keep the sagittal plane of the vaulter's body so that the energy can keep on flowing more easily.

When the legs start swinging back high quickly the upper body slightly turns to the right and moves to forward right low. Her body is straight now and tilts around its center in its own sagittal axis. The legs are describing a curved pathway up and over the croup of the horse. She releases the grips when the body is coming down on the right side of the horse so that she lands with her feet on the ground.

INTERPRETATION 1

This is my basic analysis of Lena's Compulsories. After having looked at that I tried to find out where she can improve her performance abilities. As I already mentioned before she stagnated in her capacities. Lena herself even felt as if she was vaulting worse probably because she lost confidence in herself and her group, and started to feel unsafe on the horse. She had no more fun with this sport and decided last summer that she wanted to stop vaulting. She went on being there just because I asked her to do the project with me, but she nevertheless stopped training in the winter.

So I had two goals: first to give her back the fun with vaulting, second to find out what and how she can improve her movements on the horse. It naturally turned out to be one goal!

While looking at Lena's Compulsories and her own personal Kür, I observed her most important movement patterns:

Throughout the whole exercises she keeps a very good bodily tension and straightness in her extremities but almost too much tension in her torso. She shows a clear performance of every exercise. She has a reduced range of motion in the exercises which request a high flexibility in the proximal joints, like the Mill and the Flag. In the Mill I could see as well that she has a lack of pelvic mobility so she does not show a clear hipflexion. The Psoas activity may be low while she overuses her thigh muscles. She holds her upper body very upright while sitting on the horse, which is good, but tends to be a little stiff so that her back does not swing relaxed with the motion of the horseback. She gains her

stability on the cantering horse through lifting up her center of weight into the torso where she stays in a “chest-inhaling” position with a closed and elevated shouldergirdle while she tends to hold her breath. In many exercises, especially in the Basic Seat and the Mill I could see her sliding on the horseback and finding safety by enclosing the legs strongly around the horse. She looks as if she is not flowing and grounded into the horse. The overdosed bodily tension should be replaced by flexibility and relaxation in the right moments to give her more ease, a bigger range of motion and more expression in her movements. As well she does not use spatial tension to help stabilize herself on the horse.

At this point of my analysis I started to work with Lena. At the same moment I realized that I needed to know more about the specific movements which are needed to execute the six Compulsories well. So I decided to analyze the movements of some of the best vaulters of the world and to extract a kind of “perfect” way of performing the Compulsories. Through that, I wanted to affirm my first ideas about how I needed to work with Lena and I hoped to gain more information about the points of emphasis I have to put on my work.






The basic sequences are already described as part of Lena's analysis. Here I am adding information.

THE OPTIMAL COMPULSORIES

#1: BASIC SEAT

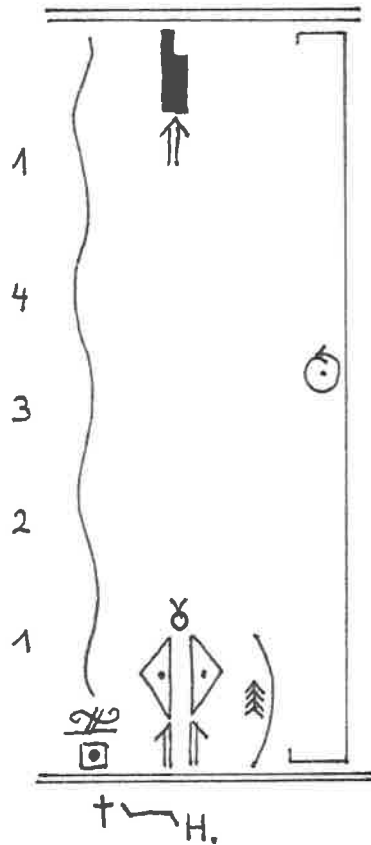
1) The “sit” is deep and grounded with a low center of weight and the pelvis and thorax shape-flowing into shaping to absorb the rocking motion of the horse.

This allows a relaxed and safe position on the horse. The upright body has a clear spatial intent into up-downness but is not tensed and tight.

2) and 4) For more expression and more clarity in Space while lifting and lowering the arms the vaulters use mostly Arc-like Directional Shape Change () and Bound Flow with Direct Space Effort (). The lifting of the arms is done differently, either by bending and extending the arms from the grips, or by using a peripheral pathway from grips () to side low () to side middle. The pathway for lowering the arms is peripheral to transverse. Both directions are done with peripheral spatial tension().


3) In the position with stretched out arms the shoulders are relaxed with a good connection from the scapulae to the coccyx (one triangle) and more stability is achieved by feeling the two triangles from head to hand to scapula.

The Motif for the Basic Seat:



GLOSSARY:

H. = Horseback


 = the subtle interplay between Shaping and Shape Flow as the vaulter adapts to the movement of the horse



1,2,etc = represents the galop step of the horse. So the timing varies with the tempo of the horse



 = surcingle grips

#2: FLAG

1) A clearer way to come into a kneeling position on the horseback:

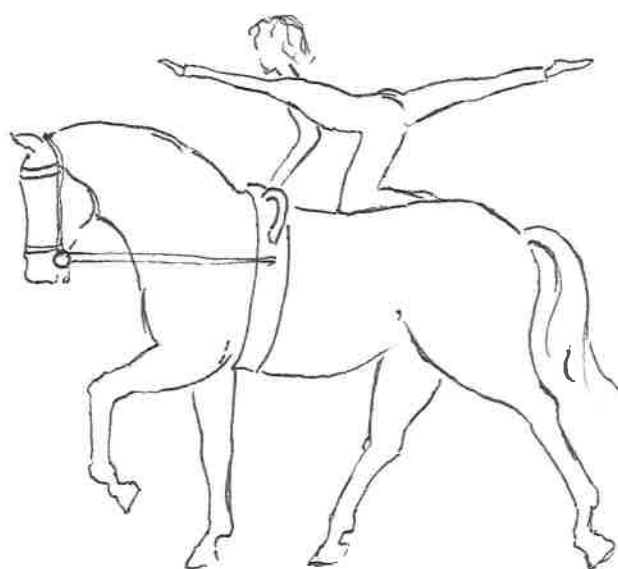
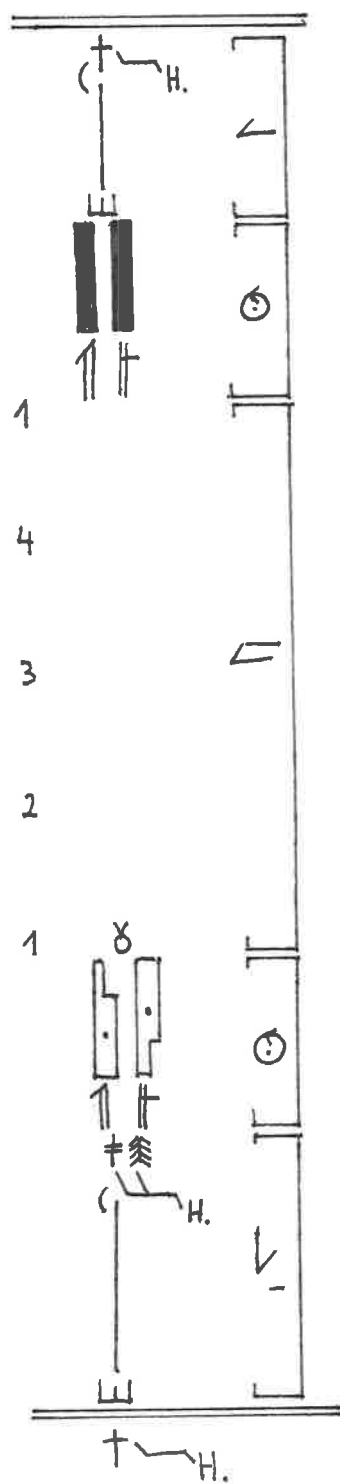
With the swing of the legs, the vaulter lifts the center of weight (pelvis) in the sagittal plane to back high with Quick Time and Light Weight Effort () while shifting the weight from the sitzbones to the arms / hands. At the same time he flexes the hips (the thigh keeps on pointing to place low) and knees to about 90°. When the knees are a little higher than the back of the horse the vaulter adducts the hips and closes the legs. First the feet then the lower legs are landing softly on the horseback.

3) The reaching forward of the arm looks nicer when it is done with a clear Arc-like Directional Shape Change () and really simultaneous with the Spoke-like Directional leg movement. 

The use of Direct Space Effort () helps to gain more clarity and stability in Space, Bound Flow Effort () should be active in the whole body throughout the whole exercise to heighten the expression of being fluid in the movements but still precise and in control.


4) In the ending position the vaulter gains stability and expressiveness by feeling the sagittal spatial pull going through the left arm, the trunk and the right leg. He stays flexible in the up-downness in his supporting limbs to adapt to the horse's movements and keeps the trunk straight without twisting in the pelvis or the shoulder girdle.

The Motif for the Flag:

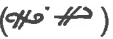



#3: MILL



1) To have a secure seat during this exercise the vaulter again needs to have his center of weight deep in the pelvis. The upper body is relaxed yet upright, rocking with the rhythm of the cantering horse. Good connection from the scapulae to the coccyx to the sitzbones and the heels. A core - distal body organisation is needed to lift the leg with a clear initiation from the Psoas while the upper body keeps its stability and verticality, being suspended into Space.

When it is perfectly done, this exercise shows four flat circles of the legs basically in the vertical plane of the horse while the vaulter is performing a full counterclockwise turn. On the videoclip you can see the second vaulter being really close to that ideal. With the others you can see some variations: some are moving more transversely but with peripheral spatial tension through forward high because they don't have this high flexibility in the hip joint. Others (like the third vaulter) are missing the gradual rotation in the hip joint and the sensation of circling a plane so that they perform an octahedral form with a stress on hitting place high ().


Here is the "perfect" version:




The right foot leads the leg with a Shaping into Arc-like Directional () movement to place high () with a clear, deep hipflexion. The foot describes a half circular pathway in the vertical plane. When the leg reaches the place high, the body turns left while the leg slowly moves across and in the sagittal plane down to place low, getting in contact to the horse again. The foot describes a half circular pathway forward in the sagittal plane. End up sitting sideways,

inside of the circle. From the vaulters perspective, the movements changes from the vertical plane into the sagittal, as an observer you perceive a vertical plane in relation to the horse.

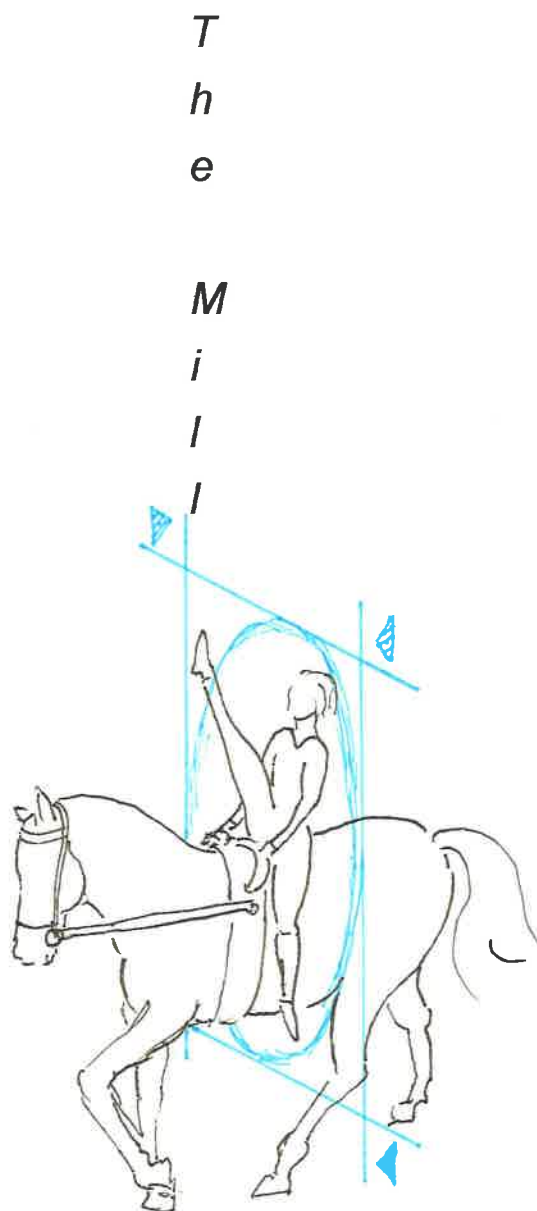
2) The left foot leads the leg in from place low (feet touch the horse) to forward high left () while the body starts turning left. This movement goes slightly into the diagonal because the turn of the body is inhibited by the hands which are still holding the grips. After releasing and retaking the grips, the vaulter faces back while the leg moves in the vertical plane to place low ().

3) The right leg is circling the planes again and the vaulter ends up facing the outside of the circle.

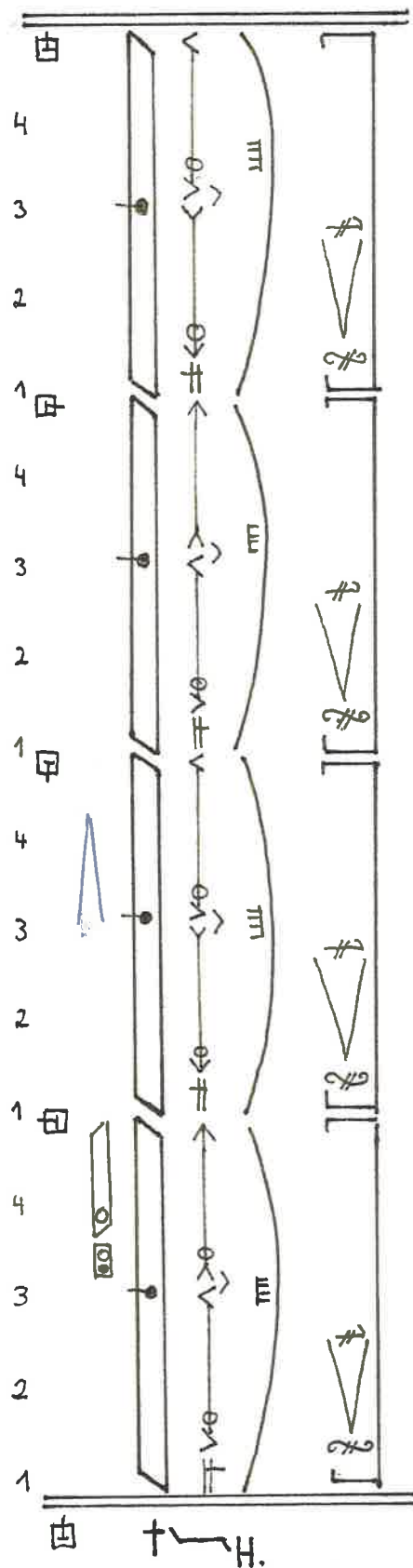
4) The left foot leads the leg on a circular pathway in the sagittal plane to forward high while the body performs a quarter turn to the left. When the vaulter faces front again, the leg moves in the vertical plane down to place low ().

The trunk stays in the vertical axis throughout the whole exercise. Each of the four phrases of this exercise takes four canter strides. To integrate the four parts of the exercise into one lively performance and to avoid a static, functional expression, the vaulter should move with constant Bound Flow Effort (). Every legmovement should show Direct Space Effort combined with a little Quickness at the beginning and a little Sustainment at the end of the movement ( to ).


This is a Vision Drive which
goes into a beautiful synergy
with the rhythmic cycling movement.




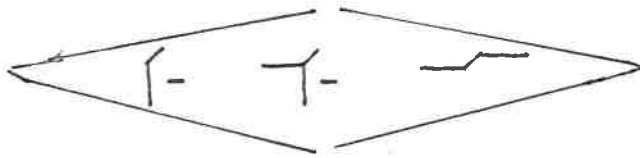
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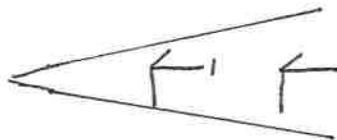
#4: SCISSORS

1) To gain more momentum, the vaulters swing the legs forward with a deep hipflexion up to 90° to 120° with a clear upper / lower body organisation ().


2) The vaulter swings his stretched-out legs on a circular pathway up towards place high (), the pelvis is lifted up into the air and the whole body is suspended into Space. The Effort phrases from a fighting Rhythm State into a Passion Drive with Strong Weight, Free Flow and Quick Time into Free Flow, sometimes combined with Direct Space Effort (Remote State):

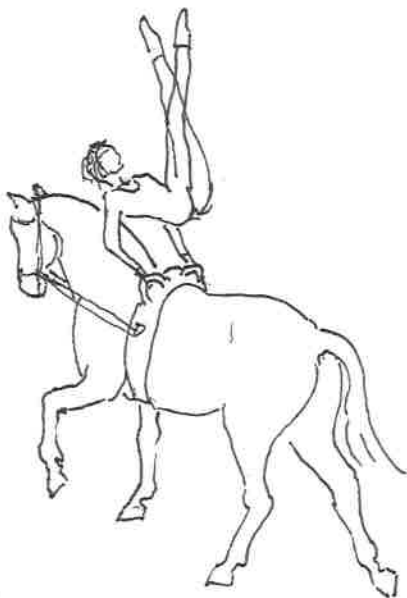


While reaching the highest point, which should be near handstand in the vertical dimension, the vaulter initiates the turn of the body by turning the pelvis. The legs are only following. With this dynamic sequencing it is easier to complete the turn before landing on the horseback. The body organisation changes from spinal to crosslateral ( to ). While moving downwards towards the horse, the vaulter uses Strong Weight Effort and increasing Bound Flow with clear spatial intent to land softly on the horseback.

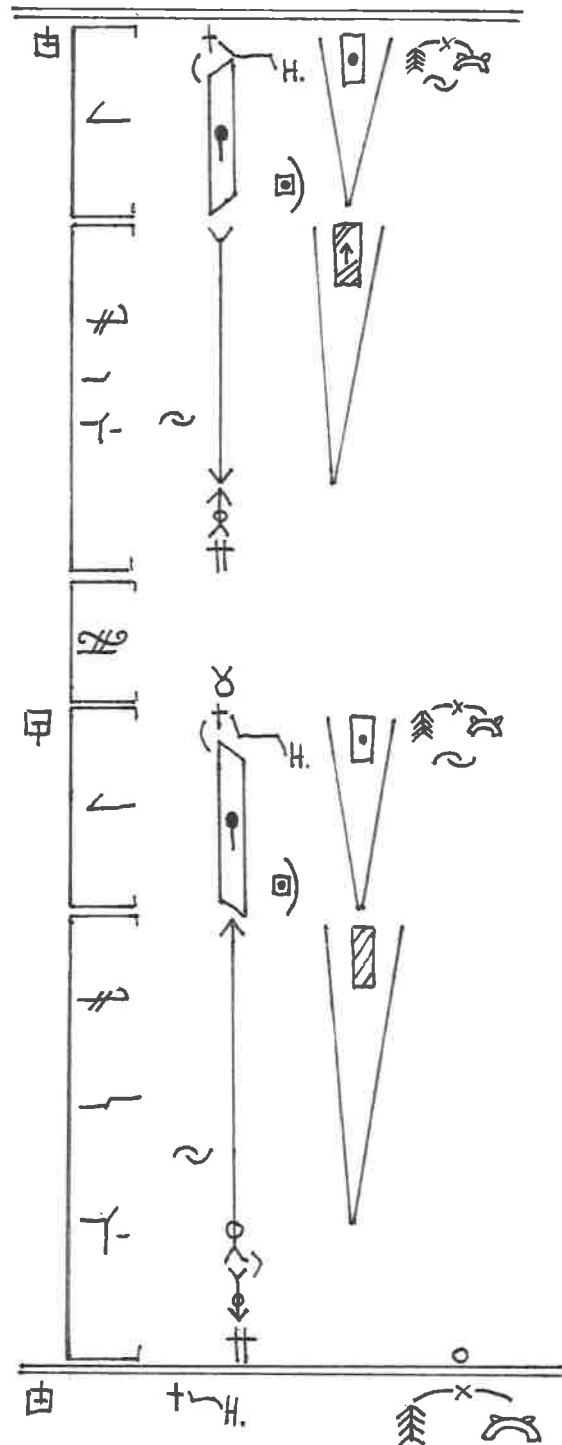


5) On the reverse, the vaulter should have enough momentum that the forward-upwards swing of the legs can pull the trunk upwards until it “lays” horizontally in

the air, showing a clear sagittal dimension. Meanwhile the slightly opened legs keep on flexing in the hips as much as possible. As seen in the Motif, the vaulter aims to reach place high () with his legs, but is inhibited in his movement because he is still holding the grips with his hands behind his back. The turn is again initiated by the pelvis.

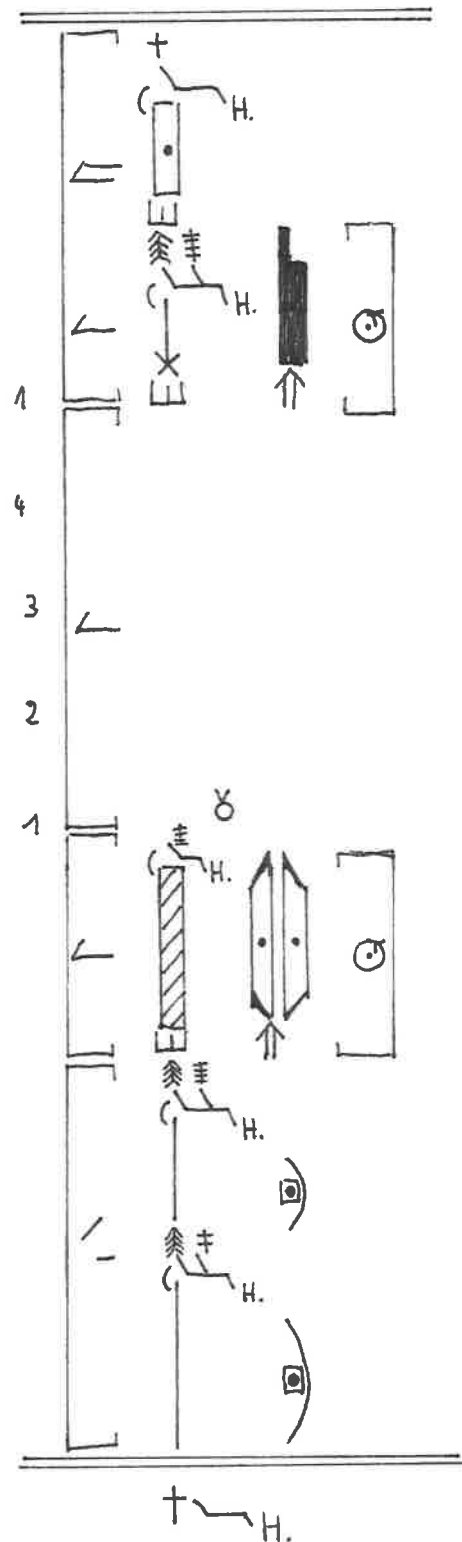




The Scissors



#5: STAND

5) In the standing position on the cantering horse the vaulter gains stability by a lively **Dynamic Alignment** from hands to scapulae to coccyx to sitzbones to heels to horseback. For a good grounding he needs to have his center of weight deep in the pelvis. Both things and the great flexibility in the ankles together should prevent the vaulter from lifting up his heels and getting out of balance. You can really see the vaulters body suspending into Space in the octahedral form of this position. To the up-downness and side-sideness of the vaulter the horse adds its forward-backness.



6) For a better balance and for more elegance in the Stand, the vaulter lowers the arms in the octahedral form with peripheral spatial tension from right/left middle towards place low ( to ) and only then he brings his hands slightly forward and flexes his whole body so that he can retake the grips.

#6: FLANK

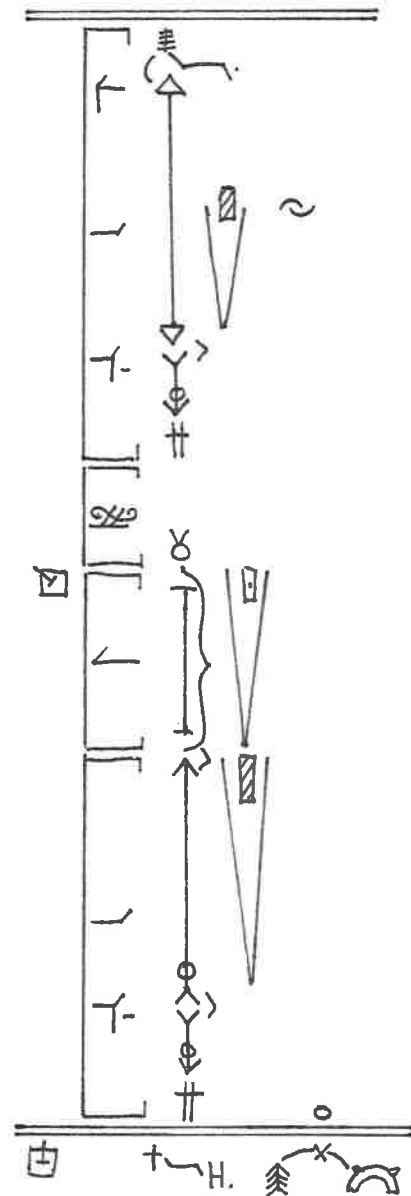
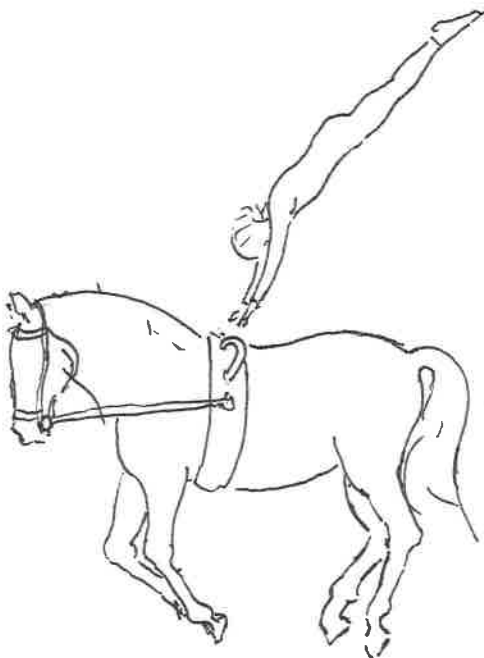
1) There should be no swinging backwards of the legs before the vaulter starts moving the legs forward to gain momentum. It changes the starting position and takes away the strength of the swinging forward.

2) Close the legs while swinging upwards, that gives more stability for the next movement.

3) At the highest point the vaulter flexes the hips as much as possible so that the feet point to the ground while the pelvis and back are moving even more to forward high so that the body stays in balance and does not fall back on the horse. With the upper body bent forward like this the legs can slide down vertical on a straight pathway.

5) In the second phase while swinging the legs over the horseback the body should swing up near handstand again. The most important thing for a secure landing on the ground is a good "flight". So at the highest point the

arms push with Strong and Quick Effort and let the grips go so that the body starts flying. The feet lead the movement from back high to right side middle and right low. The body goes from verticality upside down through the horizontal plane (head pointing left forward, feet right backwards) to verticality for landing with feet on the ground on the right side of the horse.



The Flank

INTERPRETATION 2

Comparing these two analysis confirmed my first impression of Lena and specified the points at which she has scope for improving her abilities.

The first important, basic thing for vaulting is the quality of the contact to the horse, beginning with the seat astride. Every vaulter has his strong, active center of weight deep in the pelvis. The shape-flowing body of the vaulter merges into the movements of the horse and absorbs it's rocking motion. When the sit becomes more active, the pelvis starts shaping. The big proximal joints are relaxed and the breath is flowing. Upper and lower body are connected through a Dynamic Alignment from head to tail and from scapulae to coccyx to sitzbones. The Shape Flow in the torso supports the expressiv extension of the limbs into Space so that the body is connected with and carried by Space. All that allows a relaxed uprightness and a secure seat on the cantering horse. This is the optimal ready to go position for every exercise.

The pelvis as the center of the body stays active and gives impulses for the rest of the body even when it is in the air. (See the movement from sitting to kneeling in the Flag or the Stand and the turn in the Scissors).

Every lifting of the leg, for example in the Mill, should be done with a deep flexion in the hipjoint through a high Psoas activity. Combined with a strong center of weight in the pelvis the vaulter keeps stability when he lifts one or both legs. When he is moving from his waist instead of acheving a flexion deep in the hip joint, the pelvis and lower back move with the leg and the vaulter loses his connection through the sitzbones to the horseback. His weight is transfered

obliquely on the horseback and he begins to slide. (That is happening to Lena in the Mill).

For a nicer, clearer and more expressive performance the use of the different Modes of Shape Change and the Effort qualities should be differentiated and developed.

The combination of Shape Flow alternating with Shaping in the trunk and Directional Shape Change (often in the extremities) is very common in this sport. There could be as well, like in the Flag, be for example the leg moving with Spoke-like, the arm with Arc-like Directional Shape Change. In this example, the Directional Shape Change is used as a transition into the static ending-position which is the definite exercise.

Vaulters often forget about the path they are moving, the way they go from one position to another, probably because often the trainers are not sure what is happening in between each segment of an exercise. They often only know the look of the exercise itself or the end point positions.

As important as the knowledge about the different modes of Shape Change is an idea about the structure of the Space. The vaulter would really know in which direction he is moving, and how he can use the spatial intent to support his movements and to provide stability on the cantering horse.

Effort is used to support the movement, for example in the Scissors when the body swings up into the air with the help of Strong Weight, Quick Time and Free Flow Effort (—) which is an Passion Drive, performed with a clear spatial intent. In some vaulters you may perceive as well the use of Direct Space Effort (see analysis of the Scissors). Direct Space Effort is often used to perform a

clear, expressive movement which is focussed into Space. Effort gives the vaulter as well a possibility to develop his own, personal expression. In this context it seems to me as if the use of Flow provides special possibilities for developing and it gives the exercises more elegance and an organic look. The mostly used Bound Flow helps the vaulter to adapt to the horse's movements and control his own movement especially in the moments of regaining contact to the horse (for example the landing in the Scissors). Free Flow is used in swings for thrust and in transitions to recuperate from the strong and controlled movements on the cantering horse. Light Weight is used as a motivator into flying and lifting actions and some vaulters use it as a "top layer" to gain an expression of delicacy, like the vaulter # 4 on the video.

The basis for a good performance is obviously a good muscular strength in the trunk, the legs and feet (especially for jumping on the horse and for landing on the ground to prevent injuries) and in the arms. Very important is as well the good stretching ability (very good stretched hamstrings for example allow the vaulter to perform the Mill with these great circular pathways in the different planes).

JOURNAL OF THE LESSONS

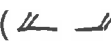

As I mentioned already, the secure contact to the horse through a deep, grounded center of weight in the pelvis and the ability to swing with its rhythm is the basis for vaulting. So I decided to put the main emphasis in the first lessons on bodywork. I tried to give Lena a better feeling for her movements and a knowlegde about the basic functions and connections of her body so that she would have the possibility to understand and influence her personal movement pattern.

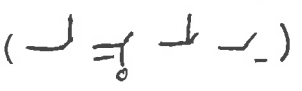




I decided to have 5 lessons with Lena, 3 in December 1999 and 2 in February 2000. Each lesson took about one hour and was done without the horse. I chose to take her away from the horse to give her room to explore her own body in a safe environment without having to cope with the incredible strong kinesthetic impulses you get from the horse moving underneath you. Plus the space where we work on the horse has always people hanging around and watching so that it is difficult to feel so safe that you can give up old patterns and start exploring unknown terrain.

We started to work with the movements of the trunk, with the connections of the head to the tailbone. We found out the possible range of motion of the spine with the pelvis, shoulder girdle and head. We worked with breath-support, reduced the body to spinal movements and used Effort intent.

Lena's preferred breath pattern was emphasizing the lifting of the thorax in the vertical dimension with an overactive shoulder girdle when she was told to take a deep breath. So I worked with hands-on in the three dimensions of breathing.

She quickly realized how she was breathing and was able to send the breath deeper into her pelvis which already gave her a better sense for her center of weight in the pelvis.

Then I combined the breathing with the movement of the spine so she did Shape Flow shrinking and growing () with the help of the awareness of the head-tail connection (). We worked in lower positions like sitting or kneeling and she easily learned to integrate her pelvis in the movement but she needed the whole 5 sessions and a lot of hands- on guiding to get a feeling for how to let the head go with the swinging of the spine. She preferred to keep control by holding the head and fixing the gaze forward.

I worked as well with the help of Effort qualities: we imagined to be a plant in the sea and tried to let us be moved by the flow of the water. The movement from the feet through the whole body to the head and arms emphasized the spinal body organisation, while I was using the breath to give the movement softness and a relaxed rhythm. This is shown on the tape in the clip # 3a (shows two moments). As well we chose a surrounding of clay so that the body had to fight his way through it and leaves a traceform. So there were two variations of movements: the first one was more passive and uncontrolled in Free Flow with various combinations of fluctuating Time Effort, diminished Light Weight and passive Strong Weight and some Indirect Space (), using Shape Flow and a little amount of Shaping (). The second one was active and controlled in Bound Flow or even without Flow and with Strong Weight and Direct Space Effort (). I was heading towards a Shaping quality (), but she used more Directional Shape Change ().


Lena preferred to perform the second one but she quickly realized that the ease and flexibility of the movements in water was missing in her movements on the horse. In the course of the lessons she began to feel more comfortable with these soft, swinging movements. The image of small waves around her and the waves of breath inside of her helped her to access the Shape Flowing quality and Effort Flow (// —).

I looked as well for a way for Lena to benefit from her ability to perform these strong, formed movements. We decided to develop different statues with the body by imagining moving through the clay again. Every statue should have a different character so that she can explore the great variety of expression in movement. I suggested that she may play with these different movement characters on the horse, especially in the Kür.

In later exercises I focussed more on the movement of the spine and the head. We imagined for example that the spine was a snake and the head or the tailbone is the snake's head which leads the movement. The spine followed the leading tail quite well but the head stayed nearly motionless and needed tactile help for integration. The head itself had great difficulties to lead the movement and only in the last (the 5th) lesson her body was so sensitive that the whole spine could follow the initiation of the head when I gave tactile impulses at her head.

The mentioned flexibility was preceded as well from the work with the thorax and the shoulder girdle. This area of Lena's body kept on being closed and rigid, so I decided to work with hands-on and a clear contact to show her the possibility to open the chest and to free the shouldergirdle (shaping thorax). See

video clip #3b. We repeated this work in three lessons and added exercises with the rotation of the shoulderjoint. These were:

- lying on the back, rotating the arm in the shoulder joint
- having the other hand on the shoulder to feel the scapula and clavicle not going with the movement of the arm
- combining the rotation of the arm with the movement from place low out to both sides middle to place high and reverse ()

In the last exercise, Lena overused her arm muscles by lifting the arm away from the ground instead of sliding on the ground. She realized how much easier the movement is when she let the ground support the weight of her arm. So she could release the tension in the superficial muscles like the Deltoides and work with the deeper layers.

With these exercises in the 4th lesson Lena learned to differentiate the movement of the arm in the shoulder joint from the movement of the scapulae. She found out that a movement of the arms to forward middle with an inward rotation to be able to hold the surcingle grips in the seat astride does not have to be connected with a closing of the shouldergirdle (which was her pattern, her "ready to go" position). Then she began to get a feeling for the possible movements of this area and the head movements were no longer restricted by the hypertension of the muscles in the front of the chest.

To give the pelvis the same independence the legs have to be able to move freely in the hipjoints, the Psoas as a hipflexor has to be active and the feeling for the pelvic-femoral rhythm should be awakened.

We started working with that theme in the 3rd lesson. We laid on the back and

tried to move one or both legs like a snake in the air with Free Flow and fluctuating Time Effort without letting the pelvis go with the movement. As you can see on the videoclip #3c, Lena had difficulties to relax in the hipjoints and let the movement flow. In the next two lessons we did different special exercises for the rotation in the hipjoints and the activation of the Psoas, so that she got the chance to develop a feeling for this joint and its connection to the pelvis. The exercises were:

- lying on the back with stretched out legs, rotate the legs in the hip joints, having more or less abduction in the hip.
- combining rotation with flexion/extension and abduction: rotate both legs out, flex one hip joint by sliding the heel towards the sitzbone, rotate both legs in, stretch the leg out while getting back to neutral rotation. Do it with the other side.
- another exercise for that: one leg flexed, the foot is stable on the ground. Make a pre thigh-lift into thigh-lift with the other leg, put the foot over the other leg's knee, rotate the leg outwards, then back to neutral. Bring the foot back to the ground and stretch out the leg. Do it several times on one side before you change to the other.
- both legs are stretched out on the ground. With the exhale make a pre thigh-lift into thigh-lift with one side and stretch the leg up to the ceiling, heel is pointing upwards. Feel the stretch in the Hamstrings. Inhale into the hip extension so that the leg moves towards the ground, exhale and lift the leg up again (thigh-lift with stretched-out knee), release the leg back into the ground. You can vary the breath rhythm.

After doing these exercises, Lena felt a little tightness in the front area around

her hip joint. So lying on the floor, I did a little swinging around of the legs and the pelvis with her which relaxed her and at the same time warmed up her pelvis rotation and made her feel the difference between rotating the pelvis and legs in the hip joints.


The next time we did these exercises I added the concept of Dynamic Alignment. The sense for the connection between the sitzbones and the heels made it easier for her to release the tension in the groin. She felt the Hamstrings work and assessed a deeper hipflexion while keeping contact with the pelvis to the ground. I gave her as well a little massage and moved her leg to make her feel relaxed around the hip and make her sense the deep flexion in the joint.

At this point we had already once worked with the concept of Space and Spatial Intent. So I suggested Lena to use the spatial pull in the exercise with the stretched out leg and use as minimal strength as possible. That helped her to ease her tension and while thinking of the alignment between the heels and the sitzbones she started feeling a countertension floating through her body.

As an important support of the movements on the horse (sitting, swinging in handstand) I made her work with the connection from the scapulae to the coccyx. In the position on lower arms and knees she pressed the hands in the floor and pulled them towards her knees without letting them slide away. At the same moment she was careful not to let the shoulders move to the ears but feel the muscular tension between the scapulae and the pelvis. Like this she activated especially her Latissimus, the Serratus anterior, the lower segment of the Trapezius and the Rhomboideus. This alignment, added to the rotary factor of

the shoulder and the shaping thorax, gives her the basis for a seat on the horse with a relaxed upper body which allows her to let the center of weight sink into the pelvis.

In the 2nd and 3rd lesson I worked with Lena on activating the pelvis as a center of weight. The exploration of the breath in the first lesson gave her a feeling for her pelvis as a filled Space, now we started to put weight into this area. We imagined having lead in the pelvis which pulls us down to the ground or having airbubbles in it which pull us upwards.

After a while Lena learned to relax the upper body and let the weight drop into the pelvis. We connected this work to the compulsory Stand where the pelvis as the center of weight should be centered above the feet so that the line of gravity ends right in between the feet. We tried as well to Punch () with the pelvis to know how it feels to move it quick and active into Space. In the videoclip #3e you can see her doing it. She was told to relax her upper body a little by moving her arms. In that moment you can watch her coming back into her "homebase" with increasing tension in the arms and narrowing in the shoulder girdle. But she was able now to let it go when she realized it.

In the waterplant exercise we already worked with the theme of softness, ease and rhythm in movement. In that exercise the impulse for the movement quality came from outside of the body, now I wanted to give her the possibility to influence her movements from a lively place inside herself. From a position lying on the side, hips and knees flexed, hands touching the sides of the head with the elbows in front of the chest to have a relaxed position for the arm, the breath starts moving the ribcage from inside. Slowly the movement spreads out

so that at the end the inhale gives the impulse for opening and rotating the chest, shoulder girdle and arms and the exhale brings the body back into a closed resting position. Lena got an idea about how the breath can be the music for her movements and how she can achieve softness and recuperation through listening to her own breath.

In the last two lessons I began to introduce the concept of Space Harmony. Out of the breathing in the three dimensions of the body we translated the movement into Space. With the awareness of the Dynamic Alignment she learned about countertension to help her body moving into a specific direction in Space. We explored the Dimensions and the Planes and tried to differentiate between one- and two dimensional movements. She got a first idea how it feels to have a stable center and to move from that center in different directions.

To improve her stretching I gave her three exercises:

- 1) One exercise for improving the flexibility in the rotation of the trunk and the extension and abduction of the arm.
- 2) One for a better stretch in the shoulder joints.
- 3) The third for stretching the hamstrings.

I added the paper which I gave her to control her own work and to remember the exercises.

ÜBUNGSBLATT

1. DREH-DEHN-LAGE: "TWISTED POSITION"

SEITLAGE, BEINE ANGEHÖCKT,



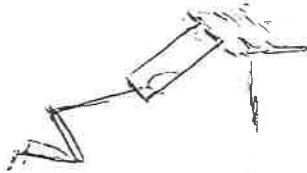
OBERKÖRPER + ARM ZUR ANDEREN
SEITE DREHEN

JEDER SEITE 1-5 MIN

"STRETCH ARMS+SHOULDERS"

3. SCHULTERN DEHNEN:

IN HOCKSTELLUNG BEIDE



HÄNDE AUF DIE TISCHKANTE,
RÜCKEN + ARME STRECKEN, MIT DEN
SCHULTERN SO TIEF GEHEN, DASS ES AN DER
VORDERSEITE DEHNT. OHNE ZU BEWEGEN MIT DEN
ARMEN NACH UNTEN DRÜCKEN, BIS 10 ZÄHLEN, LOCKER
LASSEN, WEITER DEHNEN. 1x WIEDERHOLEN. ZUM SCHLUSS
IN DER STÄRKSTEN DEHNUNG NOCHMAL BIS 20 ZÄHLEN.

FERTIG!

"STRETCH HAMSTRINGS"

2. ISCHIS DEHNEN:

DAS GESTRECKTE BEIN MIT



EINEM SEIL ODER HANDTUCH
RANZIEHEN. FESTHALTEN, MIT DEM
BEIN NACH UNTEN ANSPANNEN, BIS 10
ZÄHLEN, LOCKERLASSEN UND DAS BEIN
NOCH WEITER RANZIEHEN. DORT BIS 10
ZÄHLEN. ALLES 3-4x WIEDERHOLEN.
JEDES BEIN 1x

KONTROLL KALENDER

JEDER WOCHE AN MINDESTENS 3 TAGEN ÜBEN

WOCHE 1: 20.12.99 - 26.12.99	WOCHE 2: 27.12.99 - 2.1.2000	WOCHE 3: 3.1.2000 - 9.1.2000
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At the beginning of March, two weeks after the last studio lesson, we met again and Lena went back on the horse after three months interruption. Her assignment was to apply - without my help - the things we did in the lessons to her movement on the horse. I filmed her doing the same exercises as three months ago.

SECOND SESSION ON THE HORSE

Lena basically did her own warm-up, adding the new things to her "classic" vaulting warm-up. I just went through the hip joint - and pelvis exercises with her. Then I let her do the Compulsories and her Kür on the horse like she has done it in the first session in November.

The first thing Lena realized on the horse was a flexibility and softness in her pelvis and hips. She felt herself being in a secure contact to the horse and enjoyed sitting on the cantering horse. Her lower body absorbed the rocking motion of the horse.

So one of my goals was already partly achieved!

Her center of weight seemed to be more in the pelvis and in the Mill she activated her Psoas to lift the leg so that she showed a clearer hip flexion and did not glide anymore on the horseback.

Her upper body looked a bit more relaxed but she still showed her old ready to go position in the shouldergirdle.

In the Stand her legs swing more softly with the motion of the horse and she

did not sway anymore. She gained as well more stability by feeling the up-downness of her body with the crossing horizontal axis of the arms.

In the Flag you could see a beginning sagittal spatial pull floating through her body.


Her bodily tension and straightness decreased as a tribute to the long trainingpause. Especially her upper body strength was not so clear which gave her problems in some support movements like the Scissors.

My plan after this second session on the horse was to give her two weeks to train on the horse to get used to the exercises again. Then I wanted to videotape her once more, this time with coaching so that I can help her to apply her new abilities. What happened was that first Lena and then the horse became sick so that finally we did the third videotaping on Felix, a new, very young horse who was not completely educated. Lena had only one chance to train in between the two videosessions. Because Felix is not a very calm horse and sometimes just runs forward Lena did not do the 5. compulsory, Stand.

THE COACHING SESSION ON THE HORSE

This session developed into an additional lesson. We worked our way through every compulsory and the Kür. I chose Lena's most important themes to work on:

- The grounding to have a secure contact to the horse
- The active pelvis
- The relaxed upper body and integration of the head movements
- The clear hip flexion through an active Psoas
- The suspension of the body into Space, e.g. the use of the spatial pull
- Breath as a support

These themes are obviously not separated. In the Mill, as seen in the video clip # 6a+b, we worked on grounding in combination with relaxation and uprightness in the upper body. One serves the other. In the seat sideways, facing the outside of the circle, Lena used to have a moment of instability. Now she was told to feel her weight on both sitzbones, really look forward, facing the outside of the circle and lengthen the spine while the scapulae are actively connected to the coccyx. You can see her using the up-downness of the vertical spatial pull which runs through her connected body. The result was a secure, expressive position with the use of Strong Weight and Direct Space Effort ().

A good strong starting position for the Scissors and the Flank where she used to block her energy by a narrowed and elevated shoulder girdle and a high center of weight was found. The relaxed pelvis and hipjoints swing with the

motion of the horse. In the moments when she tended to pull her weight up again it helped her to breath deep into the pelvis. Remembering the Dynamic Alignment from scapula to coccyx opened her shoulder girdle. From that position it is easier to swing the legs forward strongly to gain momentum for the next movement.

For this swinging - forward of the legs, the deep flexion in the hipjoints is important so that she can keep a good connection with the pelvis to the horseback. You find the same idea in the reverse movement of the Scissors when the legs swing up into the air. The videoclip # 6d shows Lena doing this movement without the turn. She used spatial intent, breath support and activation of the Psoas and showed a great hipflexion. In the Mill I could observe the same clear hipflexion although the flexibility in the joints is not higher than before, only now she was able to use her full capacity.

The activation of the pelvis is obvious in her better grounding even in higher positions like the "prince-kneeling" sideways (videoclip # 6g), when only one foot and the other lower leg are in contact to the horse. In the "before" video you could see her swaying in this position with a cramped upper body. Now she lets her weight drop down and keeps on breathing and she looked relaxed and safe in the exercise. She even shaped her arms in Space so that the whole exercise looked much more expressiv. As an observer it makes me feel good and relaxed to look at such a movement and it involves me in the process because I see her being deeply connected to the horse and alive in what she is doing.

Lena managed as well to be really light in the pelvis when she trained the movement from sitting astride into kneeling (for the Flag and the Stand). When

concentrating on the pelvis she did not need the feet anymore to support the movement.

The use of Space to support a dynamic or static position was just our last, added theme and we did not work a lot with it (it is to be continued!).

Nevertheless Lena played with it and I could clearly see the success of it in some of her free exercises, for example in the flag sideways upside down (video clip # 6f) or in the movement of her arm and head in the first exercise (video clip # 6e). You can observe the clarity of Lena perceiving her limbs as spatial extensions and as forms or lines interconnected in Space. In the Compulsories you can see as well an underlying perception of Space in her movements.

OUTLOOK

In our last session, Lena made friends with the horse Felix and with herself as a vaulter. She enjoyed herself in the exercises and was eager to learn and experience more. She decided that she wants to start vaulting again. She asked me to train her as a single vaulter so that she will be able to go on competitions not in a group but alone.

I think that she has chosen the perfect way for herself. Now that she has experienced her own body in the secure surrounding of the practice we worked in and now that she has gained confidence in herself, she can take the next step. Adding a horse to the game means having a partner to whom you have to relate and adapt to be able to create something new, the vaulting. Another step with a new theme would be sharing the horse with somebody else, creating a Kür with another vaulter, trusting him and being able to support him. I am perfectly happy that she chose the first step so that there will be room for her to develop her own skills.

Now that Lena has a basic bodily knowledge which incorporates the knowledge about the body and the wisdom of the body itself, I would like to challenge myself and her to find the "diamonds" in her movements on the horse. That means looking for an element where she is completely involved, a movement that she loves to perform and that shows her as a skillful performer.

This could be for example the turn after the first exercise in the Kür (see video clip # 6e). From the first time on she did that movement she did a beautiful opening in her center while describing a wide open arc with the leg. So now I

would make her conscious of what she is doing and ask her what she likes about that movement. Then she could play with spreading it into her whole body or finding this enjoyable opening turn in other exercises. Like this she could find meaning for her movements which will strengthen her self-confidence and the joy of performing and will give her access to her own, personal expressivity.

SUMMARY

The first thing I want to say about this project is that I absolutely enjoyed doing it, especially the work with Lena and the final work on the drafts when the hard part of analyzing and writing everything down was mainly done. Being forced to go over the project again and again over a longer period of time gave me the chance to clarify the things I did intuitively and to start making larger connections. Once again I realized how many possibilities to improve my work and to understand more about the profound meaning of movement arise out of really processing what I am doing.

LMA gives me a tool to perceive myself and the elements of my work by being specific while broadening my thinking horizon at the same time.

What I really enjoyed in the work with Lena was that she was so responsive to what I did with her and so interested in the work. I was not working exclusively out of the position of a teacher, instead I moved with her, adapting to her momentary needs and to what she offered in her movements. I perceived the

work in the sessions without the horse as a working together, and I was enjoying with her the moments when she developed or experienced something new. This attitude towards her may have helped her to start exploring the deepness of her body without feeling exposed and observed.

One incident confirmed what I knew already about myself: The most efficient way for me to learn, and, I guess, the only “real” one, is through my body. It provides me with a deep, connected understanding of the things I already know theoretically in my head. When I did and wrote this project I had not yet experienced and therefore did not really know about the power of Space and its meaning and connection to my moving body. I never realized how it feels when the Shape-Flow supported body forms a clear spatial intent so that its movement does not end at the edges of the body but spreads out into Space. I never clearly felt two spatial pulls running through my body, forming a countertension to stabilize me.

Because my body was not ready I did not perceive Lena using the spatial intent like I tried to teach it to her. I was concentrating more on the body level changes and perceptions of her. Only now I see how much stability and expressivity she gained by moving actively into Space.

There has been another interesting process going on when I wrote down the first draft of my project. My idea to measure Lena’s abilities on the performance of the world champions turned out to be a trap. I just described her deficits and it was absolutely not satisfactory to work on that basis. So I started describing *what she is doing* instead of *what she is not doing* and realized that she is already a skillful performer. It changed my whole inner attitude towards Lena

when I succeeded in turning around the way to look at her and our mutual process. So I succeeded in seeing that I used the analysis of the champions to get information about Lena and not as an end in itself.

I realized that I feel "at home" when I work on a bodily level or with Shape themes, but that have more difficulties to impart the meaning of Space, which I already described above. This theme is newer for me and I am definitely not used to working with the combination of corrective bodywork and Space. Now I begin to understand how deeply the body is connected to Space and how the inner and the outer spatial organisations mirror and support each other.


The knowledge about the Dynamosphere with the interplay of Space, Shape and Effort opens up new possibilities for me in doing bodywork with other people. That concerns as well my way of moving and relating to the other as the way the other learns to use Space, Shape and Effort.



In the lessons I used different Effort qualities in my body to motivate and influence Lena's movement. I assume that I was communicating a lot through Effort. We were not only doing the exercise itself in attuned Effort qualities, but I took the Effort as well in my voice and I mainly kept it when I was giving her tactile corrections. So I think that I gave her different possibilities to catch the quality of the movement.



Here is an overview about how I used Effort Intent in the work with Lena and some ideas about how I could use it in the future.

I used Flow Effort (—/—) to achieve softness in her movements and facilitate connections on body level and to give her a chance to sense the body differently while moving. I think that Flow Effort can serve the last issue because it is

process-oriented. I used it as well to get a more dynamic whole-body movement and to enliven the sense for sequencing a movement through the body. I encouraged Lena to use more Free Flow because she naturally uses more Bound Flow. When I go on working with her I will address the transitions between Bound and Free Flow and the way both is useful on the horse.

Strong and Light Weight Effort () were my great helpers to activate the pelvis as the center of gravity. I will go on using it to explore grounding and the body's relation to gravity in going away and towards the ground and the horse. I used it as well to facilitate dynamics.

I mostly used Direct Space Effort () to help Lena accessing Space and developing Spatial Intent. I think it would be useful to work with Indirect Space () too, because that may help to stay oriented on the horse and in the space while twisting and turning and flying and jumping in the exercises. As well it is a security issue especially for the younger children when they are not on the horse. In that situation they have to be aware of ten other children, the trainer and the moving horse at the same time.

I certainly used Quick Time Effort () in the sessions with Lena to activate and energize the atmosphere and to access dynamics. In exchange with Sustained Time () it gave her a first impression of phrasing. To increase her sense for the timing of an action on the horse in relation to the swing of the canter I will work with Time Effort in combination with Weight in a Rhythm State.

Working my way through this project with my new "LMA-glasses" gave me a clearer picture of what vaulting is about and what elements it contains. I discovered many things that I will apply in the future to other vaulters which I

think will help them to be more save while vaulting and to improve their performance abilities. Even before I started this project I really liked to work with the children on body level off or on the horse. I always enjoyed to see them understanding something about their body and getting curious and enthusiastic about how they move. Now I feel very inspired about my LMA background, which will allow me to be more creative and comprehensive about how I can offer a broader knowledge to them.

I experienced this project as a way to integrate the different aspects of LMA and BF and connect them to my work and interests and to myself. The project was the clay on which I could practice everything we learned. I could try out what impact the newly learned material has on the project and how different aspects of LMA melted together when I applied them in the project. And I experienced how my work and my perception of it mirrors my moving preferences and my way of thinking and feeling. This opens a door to enrich my personality and my personal live through my work.