

## **Movement Psychology or 'Character Analysis'** - where does it come from?

Movement Psychology or 'Character Analysis' is the product of a 50 year study of human expression, conducted initially by Rudolph Laban in collaboration with William Carpenter - and completed by Yat Malmgren.

Laban originally trained as an architect in his native Bratislava, but he was fascinated by the ways that human beings 'moved through space' and what those movements revealed about their authors - the personalities that generated those movements.

This interest led Laban into the world of dance, where he became renowned. It was here that he met Yat Malmgren, who later brought the work into the acting arena. Yat completed the theory through his work at the drama school that he co-founded - the legendary Drama Centre London.

The Work was and is used by generations of actors to achieve character transformation - notably Anthony Hopkins, Sean Connery, Pierce Brosnan, Colin Firth, Tom Hardy, Michael Fassbender, Helen McCrory, amongst many others.

Another collaborator with Laban - Warren Lamb - left for the US before Yat had completed the theory. Lamb introduced the work to the dance community there - and indeed to the CIA, who use it to this day as a means to analyse individuals - they call it "Movement Pattern Analysis".

Laban believed that you can tell who someone is - what they want and the obstacles that they face both internally and externally - by the way that they walk into a room.

It is the language of human expression that is common to our species - it doesn't matter where in the world an individual is born - it transcends language. This is why you can watch a film or a play in a language of which you have no understanding - and if the acting is any good, you can understand the story.

Laban believed that all of our life stories are printed on our bodies like a book. He understood that we can all perform the same movement - for example, to reach out and pick up a cup of coffee - but that the quality and precise nature of that simple movement, the tempi and flow involved, the energy within the gesture, will be unique to that individual.

Laban posed the question - why?

There are four *cognitive* factors that have been known to science for centuries - and that also received great attention from the famed Swiss psychotherapist Carl Jung, who named them:

<b>Sensing</b>	(perception through the body)
<b>Thinking</b>	(intellectual reflective reasoning)
<b>Intuiting</b>	(insight by the mind without reasoning)
<b>Feeling</b>	(the emotion of liking or disliking)

## **Movement Psychology or 'Character Analysis'** - where does it come from?

Laban came to realise that these four ways that human beings cognitively understand the world are of primary importance - we are catapulted into this world at birth, into a culture and a family with a certain psychological reality; and in order to optimise our chances of survival, Nature ensures that each baby develops a personality, a character, a physicality in response to those factors. They do this by developing the cognitive factors (of *sensing, thinking, intuiting, feeling*) - but some of the four develop more intensively than others.

This, in turn, sculpts the way that we move, that we walk and talk, the way we think and how we understand the world: eventually it will affect our likes and dislikes, and even our politics etc.

To put it very simply, we start to generate rhythms that are perceivable, tangible, readable. A personality can be recognised because it exhibits certain specific rhythms, both internally and externally - and those rhythms - the music, if you like - tell us huge amounts about the person who generates them.

In turn, you can back-engineer those rhythms, to work out what must have happened to that individual in order for them to be generating such tempi.

What might happen to the individual in the future?

We can only generate a reality from the way that our cognition, our consciousness works.

You can understand their talents and limitations. You can even help them to increase their potential.

This work inevitably becomes very complex, but it is extraordinarily precise - and the theory, as developed by Laban and Yat Malmgren, provides us with an extensive typology that can be utilised - by those who want to undertake the journey.

In this regard, it is totally unique.

**Giles Foreman**  
2023