



Labanotation

DANCE NOTATION

WRITTEN BY: [Ann Hutchinson Guest](#)

Alternative Title: Kinetography Laban

Labanotation, original name **Kinetography Laban**, [system of recording human movement](#), originated by the Hungarian-born dance theorist [Rudolf Laban](#).

Labanotation grew from Laban’s interest in movement, which stemmed from his early travels. He studied architecture and philosophy in Paris and worked as an illustrator before becoming involved in the performing arts. His architectural interests led to his analysis of the spatial structure of movement itself. After publishing a shorthand system for his theories (*Choreographie*, 1926), he developed a more detailed and more widely applicable notation—one that spelled out the elements that produce the movement pattern—and published it in the book [Schrifttanz](#) (“Written Dance”) in 1928. This work provided the basis of the system that bears his name—labanotation. From the 1930s to the ’90s, the system was refined, given a more universal basis, and developed to a high level by research practitioners in Germany, England, and the United States. In time, textbooks on the Laban system were published in English, French, German, Dutch, Polish, Hungarian, Spanish, and Swedish. Many other publications of notated dance techniques, dances of different [cultures](#) around the world, and significant choreographic scores have appeared.

The Laban system is an “alphabet” system in that symbols represent movement components through which each pattern is “spelled out” (unlike some other notation systems, which use distinct symbols to represent established movement forms). In standard labanotation a vertical three-line staff represents the performer. The centre line divides the staff into right and left columns, which represent the main body parts. The staff, read from bottom to top, is written from the performer’s point of view. Each direction symbol is based on a rectangle and indicates four movement factors: its shape shows the direction of the movement; its shading indicates level; its length represents duration of the movement (the shorter, the quicker; the longer, the more extended in time); and its placement on the staff indicates the part of the body that is in action. Families of signs represent the minor body parts, and additional signs such as pins and hooks denote details modifying the main action.

The Dance Notation Bureau in [New York City](#) was established in 1940 to further the art of dance through the use of notation. Existing notation systems were studied, and labanotation was found to be the most solidly based and the most versatile for all movement needs. The notation of choreographic works was undertaken to provide a literary heritage for dance. As interest developed in recording historical, national, ballet, and contemporary dances in both Western and non-Western cultures, labanotation centres were established in China, France, Germany, Japan, Poland, and the United Kingdom. From the 1950s labanotation was included in dance studies in colleges and universities in the United States and around the world.

Labanotation can record movement at a general outline level or can become increasingly specific so that every spatial [nuance](#), dynamic variation, and temporal relationship between individual movements can be clearly stated. Shorthand devices are used by practitioners, but final scores include all necessary detail. A simpler form, named Motif Notation, was developed later by Ann Hutchinson Guest and others as a dance education tool with which both children and adults might explore basic movement actions and concepts. It is also used as a tool for movement observation. In 1952 a labanotation [score](#) was the first dance notation score to be accepted for copyright registration.

Labanotation continues to be developed worldwide. The International Council of Kinetography Laban, established in England in 1959, meets biennially to investigate new ideas and usages; computer-aided labanotation software, in particular LabanWriter and Calaban, enables better preservation and access to labanotation scores and teaching materials; dance documentation has taken on new life as software allows the viewing on CD-ROM of a particular labanotation score alongside a video recording of a performance of the recorded work; and research continues into how computers can be used to translate labanotation into movement.

Whereas labanotation has been used primarily to record dance, it has had other applications as well. Labanotation has been used in industrial work studies as well as for recording [physiotherapy](#) exercises and analyzing movement in sports such as swimming and [ice skating](#). It also has been used in zoological studies to describe, for example, the mating dance of the [jumping spider](#) and to study albatross movement. (See *also* [dance notation](#).)

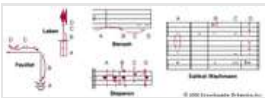
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choreography

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3 REFERENCES FOUND IN BRITANNICA ARTICLES

Assorted References

- development by Laban
 - (In [Rudolf Laban](#))
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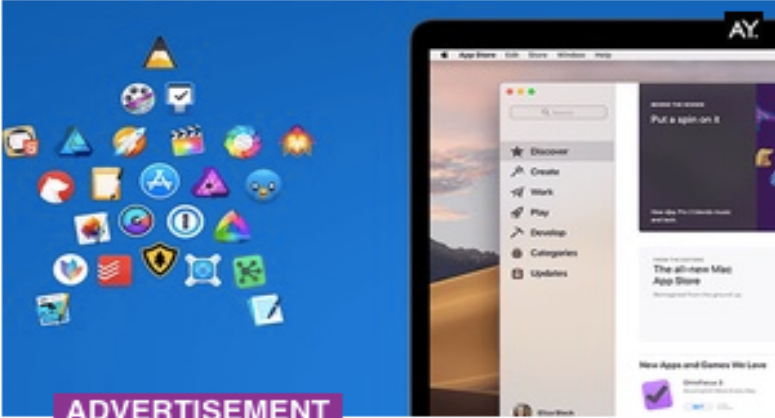
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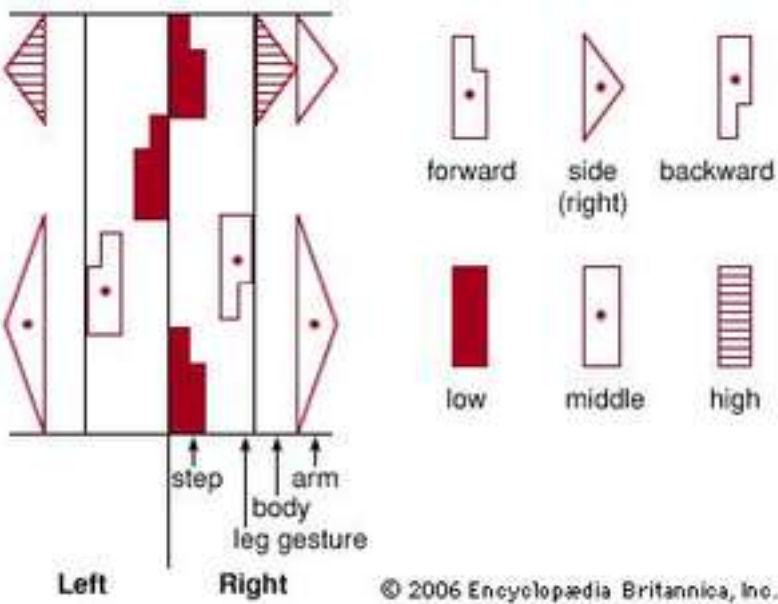
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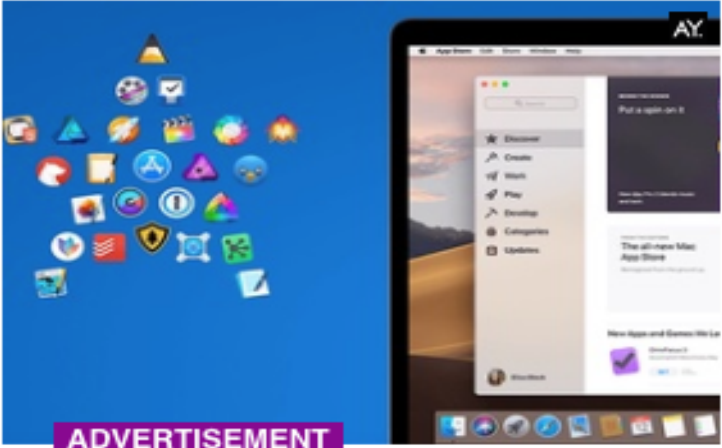
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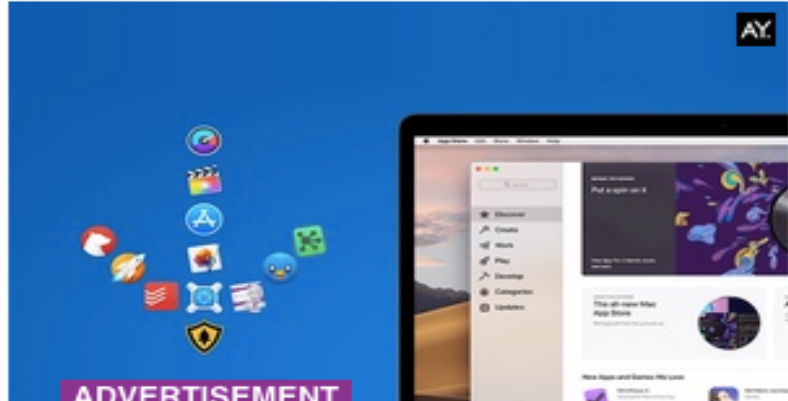


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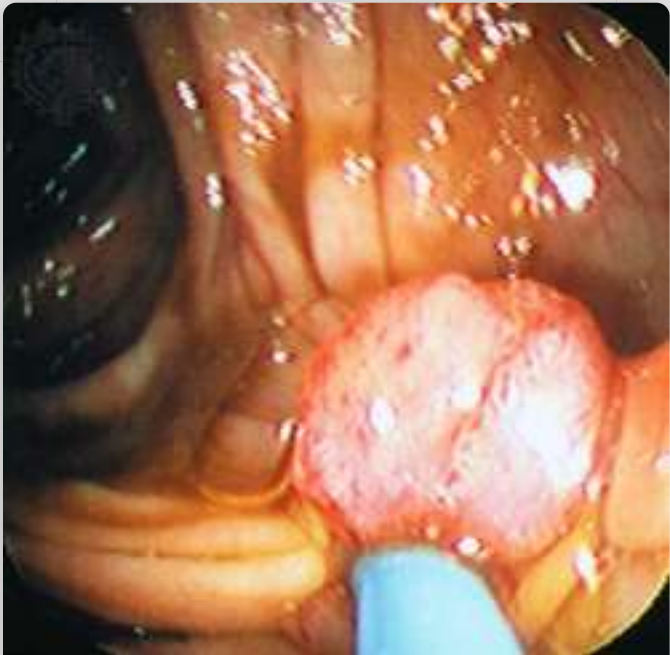


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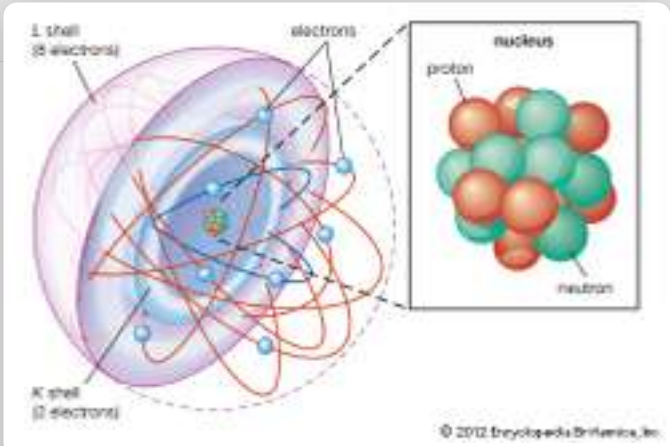
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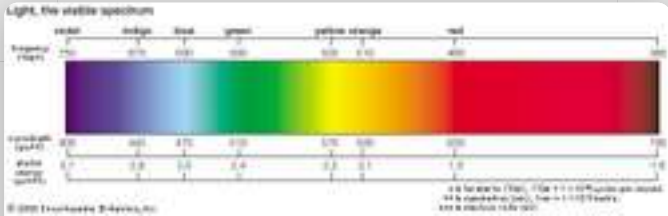
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