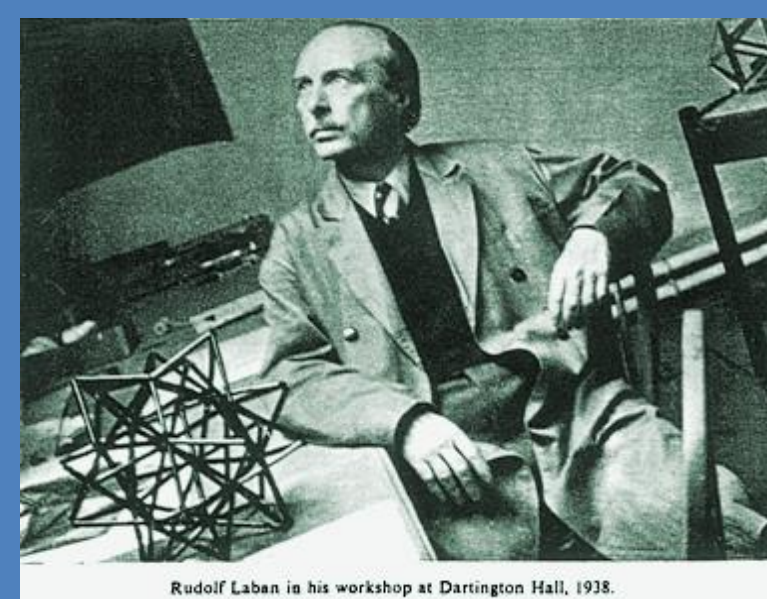


Laban's efforts and signing styles in narratives, poetry and song.

In studies of sign language narrative texts, small changes in signing style can help signify changes in role. The same elements of style determine the overall mood and feeling of a text. They can also mark a text as being poetry, narration, or some other genre. I have found that these same kinds of minute changes in style are used frequently in Deaf song to differentiate sub-genres and to create mood and effect. It is often difficult to describe these small changes in a meaningful and consistent way; however, I have found that studies of dance and movement from the early 1900s provide a useful rubric for accurately describing these types of changes.



Marked signing can be depicted as a deviation from the center on any of these four dimensions: Time Space Weight Flow

Time refers to the rapidity of the movement segment of a sign. The term *movement* is understood as a change in location, orientation, handshape, or even facial expression.

Space can be analyzed as either direct, moving the shortest distance between two positions, or flexible, in which the movement is larger and often in a circuitous motion. Another perspective is that direct movements are smaller, whereas flexible movements cover more area and are thus larger.

Weight describes the tenseness or laxness of the muscles during the sign or phrase.

Flow refers to the transition between signs. A smooth flow would be one where the viewer would have a hard time telling where one sign stopped and the next one started. Obstructed flow is where there is a hold at the end of the sign or a movement to some neutral location.

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