“Such Shaping Fantasies”
Physicality and Character Workshop

● INTRODUCTION
  ○ One actor may be (and often is) called upon to play several parts in a single show.
    ■ In the ASC’s 2011 Summer/Fall Season’s *Henry V*. Twelve actors performed 50 parts.
  ○ Consider the doubling chart. Point out the doubled roles.
    ■ Give a brief summary of play if needed
  ○ Physicality is one tool actors can use in developing a character and differentiating it from other characters..
    ■ *The Tempest*, Caliban is described as “mooncalf,” “cat,” “fish,” and often as “monster.” The actor and director are left with many choices as to Caliban’s appearance.
    ■ Even the smallest characters can communicate information on the setting and mood of a scene through their physicality.
    ■ CAVEAT: Today we will work together to explore just one MANY methods that actors may use to develop a character’s physicality, not every actor at ASC uses these, nor are they disciplines we follow at every rehearsal. They are merely one approach we can use to develop a language of movement and ideas about different physical ways to approach characters with an eye to doubling, in particular..

● ACTIVITY: EXPLORING LABAN EFFORTS
  ○ Everyone on their feet (if the space is too small for the number of students to safely move around split the class in half and trade off). Ask them to walk around as their neutral selves.
  ○ Ask them to walk as if they are walking from a pool back home on hot pavement and they forgot their sandals. Or they have to pee, but they do not know where the bathroom is. Quickly and with urgency.
    ■ Sudden efforts: dabs, punches, slashes, and flicks
  ○ Ask them to do the same thing, but in slow motion.
    ■ Sustained efforts: glides, floats, wrings, and presses
  ○ Ask them to move as if their sternums are floating. Everything is light and whimsical.
    ■ Light efforts: dabs, glides, floats, and flicks.
  ○ Ask them to move as if they are moving through peanut butter, they weigh 450 pounds, and are 100 years old.
- Heavy efforts: presses, punches, wrings, and slashes
  - Ask them to move all at right angles. Think about squares. Think about the most rigid, stick-in-the-mud, hoity-toity 7th grade history teacher they had. Think about drill sergeants.
  - Direct efforts: Punches, presses, dabs, and glides.
  - Ask them to move while thinking about circles, spirals, and squiggles. You don’t know where you are going but you’ll be darned if that’s going to stop you from getting there.
  - Indirect efforts: wrings, slashes, floats, and flicks.
  - Explain that they have just explored the Laban Efforts.
- Laban is a way and language for interpreting, describing, visualizing, and notating all ways of human movement. It was created by Rudolph Laban, who was a dancer and a fencer, in the early 1900’s.
- It is used as a tool by dancers, actors, athletes, and physical and occupational therapists. It is one of the most widely used systems of human movement analysis.
  - Time: Sudden or Sustained
  - Weight: Heavy or Light
  - Space: Direct or Indirect
  - Flow: Bound or Free
  - Laban Efforts can be used for vocal quality as well as physical choices.
- ACTING FROM CENTERS
  - Head - “I know” and “I don’t know”
    - Characters such as Holofernes or Malvolio may not be very aware of their bodies, because all of their energy is in their head.
  - Heart - “I feel” and “I don’t feel”
    - A lover may lead with their heart, such as Ann Page or Master Fenton. If a character is very afraid of being exposed, they may hide their heart and cave their chest.
  - Gut - “I will” and “I will not”
    - A character that leads with the gut will quickly assert his/her presence, for example Sir John Falstaff.
  - Pelvis - “I desire” and “I do not desire”
    - A very lusty character may lead with their pelvis. Which characters may choose to do this in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*?
  - ACTIVITY: Have the group all standing. Ask them to stick out each center and say the corresponding subtext. Ex, head out “I know ____” head in “I don’t know ____”
  - Other obscure centers, (inspiration for clowns): ears, knees, nose, elbow, heels,
toes. How does leading with these unconventional centers make for interesting or funny movement?

- **ANALYZING THE TEXT**
  - **ACTIVITY:** Give the students quotes for each character. On the left are descriptor lines. On the right are lines for the students to read.
  - Ask the students to read the character’s line and make performance choices based off the description.
  - Have the volunteers trade text. Have them recite the new lines making different physical choices. Ask them to try the opposite physical choice.
    - This works especially well with the doubled parts. Doubled characters are denoted by asterisks or carrots beside their names.
  - Ask them how they felt each time? What did each choice bring to the character?