

A systematic approach to CI technique?

by Joerg Hassmann (& Daniel Werner), 14.8.2011

In our investigation to understand and teach CI we were mentally highly satisfied when we managed to reduce more and more what we considered to be essential on a technical level. The emerging (and still developing) result felt very systematic, which made us advertise our training programme as a 'systematic approach to CI technique'. Maybe the phrase 'systematic approach' is too big. We are not sure. Decide yourself. This is what we found:

We developed a vocabulary that makes it incredibly easy and efficient for us to name different layers of the technical side of this dance form and how those levels relate to each other. We see three main areas:

1. the organisation of the moving body
2. CI specific ways to handle shared weight
3. CI specific communication through touch

Concerning the **organisation of the moving body** we mainly refer to somatic concepts like BMC¹ and Bartnienieff fundamentals² with a main focus on developmental movement patterns and specific systems/areas of the human anatomy like the myo-fascia web³, bones & joints, partly organs and fluids of the body. They help us to describe, teach and experience two main structures/ concepts for our bodies to organise movement in an efficient way

1. the center with basic movement patterns that we describe with phrases and images like strong center–soft limbs, navel radiation or soft spine
2. the spine: an active, strong or supporting spine based on spinal push or spinal reach.

The way we relate to gravity underlies both of these organising structures. For that we use the yield-push-reach sequence - as described in BMC - that defines an appropriate way to modulate our body tone.

For the field of **shared weight** we collected the most important CI situations that occur in dances and jams as there are

- no-weight, leaning and full weight situations
- the full weight situation with the differentiation of

- under & over dancer and
- floor-level, 4-footer and standing level (pelvis & shoulder lifts)

In our training programme we clarify in which way the center or the spine as the underlying organising structures support leaning situations or the roles of under & overdancer in the different levels and especially in the common transitions between roles and levels.

For the understanding of the **communication through touch** we use the roles of leading and following as a base. Giving and receiving directions is communicated through friction under the skin, which connects to the fascia system of the body. We call this principle by its sensation 'swimming and pulling under the skin', which happens on either side of the point of contact. The point of contact can

1. be fixed, which invites moving together through space. Or it can change through the
2. rolling point of contact or through
3. sliding

This distinction also helps to understand how we can organize two bodies in continuous physical contact when we change levels or the roles of under & overdancing.

In the process of defining the essentials of CI technique and arranging them into a system, we are constantly delighted by the details and complexity of each single topic and especially by the connection between them. We imagine this as an inspiration for others in the CI community to clarify their own understanding of the form.

- ¹ BMC, Body Mind Centering. Developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, it is an experiential study based on the embodiment and application of anatomical, physiological, psychophysical and developmental principles, utilizing movement, touch, voice and mind. This study leads to an understanding of how the mind is expressed through the body and the body through the mind.
- ² Bartenieff Fundamentals. A set of concepts, principles and exercises - developed by Imrgard Bartenieff - that apply Laban's movement theory to the physical / kinesiological functioning of the human body.
- ³ Myo fascia web. A certain type of connecting tissue, like a web of strong and elastic skin bags, that wrap and connect all organs and muscles to hold them in place and allows them to slide against each other.