

# The ‘basic neurological patterns’ in a somatic approach to acting

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**Abstract.** In this paper I will discuss the application of the developmental movement theory into the actor training process, integrating a new discourse phenomenological application of somatic language. This is formulated out of the development and dissemination of my Practice as Research project which consists of a somatic approach to actor training and the embodiment of the role. Deploying a Practice-as-Research methodology (Nelson, 2013) I imbricate somatic theory and acting exercises through the discourse of phenomenology, particularly Merleau-Ponty's notions of embodied perception and experience (Merleau-Ponty 1968, 2002).

The practical element of my research derives from the somatic approach of Body-Mind Centering by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen (Cohen: 1993, 1999, 2012). I actualise the explorations based on the way that Linda Hartley, my current trainer as a somatic practitioner, developed Cohen's method in her IBMT (Integrative Bodywork and Movement Therapy) practice (Hartley: 1995). The fundamental structural framework, in which I formulate my somatic approach to acting, is Cohen's work on ‘movement developmental patterns’ that I explored in Hartley's module on Infant Movement Development. These movement patterns, known as the Basic Neurological Patterns (BNP), represent the sequence of organised movement in human development from the moment of conception. The first pattern is breathing. I incorporate ‘external respiration’ or ‘lung breathing’ with Cohen's concept of ‘internal respiration’ or ‘cellular breathing’. I will disclose examples of applying the patterns into acting explorations (such as the ‘cellular metamorphosis’ exercise) described through the lenses of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological discourse.

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