

***Appalachian Spring* by Aaron Copland**

To create the piece, the facilitators (Susi Thornton, Maggie Killingbeck, Janet Lunn) were professional demonstrators, each taking responsibility for one section each.

Break-out rooms put us into partners (I met someone I had not met in person before!), and into smaller groups (again new people!) These groups then were brought together into the larger group.

To hold the piece together we were reminded to keep in mind 'the story' and as we practised the sequence, the joy came from moving as a sequence from one discipline to another.

As I became more familiar with the choreographic material, I developed my performance energies for each section, and it was possible to feel more of a connection to the others on the screen in front of me. I began to experience moments of harmony in the physical space where I was creating a new energy (I had never danced wildly in this studio apartment – and although I was warned by Susi in the warm up to watch out for hazards in the room, when I got over confident in the final performance I did had a collision with my electric fan overhead! A reminder to always keep spatially aware even when you give your all in the final performance!) Above all, the final performance felt as if we were united to the theme and the concepts behind the moves we were all making – even if each person had interpreted things in their own style, with their own technique and in total isolation!

Here are some comments from other participants at 2021 Dance Day:

Monika Ptasinska, RDMP (Registered Dance Movement Psychotherapist and Dance Fitness Instructor)

I attended another Laban Guild virtual workshop focusing on the celebration on the international dance day led by Maggie, Susi and Janet. They created creative space for us on the Zoom and I really felt being part in it even it was virtual. Focusing on the creating phrases, learning the movement material, working in the breakout rooms and learning from each other, I really felt connected with the theme of new hope.

I just loved the interactions, the small screens moving in front of me within the theme. There was a movement for finding my flow, changing the time, moving within the planes, and creating the 3 Rings. I really felt being connected to the inner and outer space. After the session I felt that we created something together, moving together in different time-zones and geographical places.

Pauline Cockburn

The movement choir held on International Dance Day was a truly international virtual event, something that probably wouldn't have happened before Lockdown.

I particularly enjoyed the use of throwing ourselves into the diagonals as we set ourselves free from the confines of our homes. Working in zoom break out rooms is always a joy, not only to share movement ideas but a great time to catch up and meet new Laban admirers.

Jackie Richards

Thank you so much for a very enjoyable Movement Choir on Saturday. I really felt I had used my whole being dancing! Laban Choirs led by Maggie, Susie and Janet really are enjoyable and by the end a whole dance evolved. Everyone learnt a series of task and created and interpreted these in their own ways. You really feel you have danced and expressed yourself. Although we were all on our own dancing through Zoom there was a real sense of connectedness and dancing together. The presenters were very experienced dance facilitators and all instructions were clear and communicated with humour, wit, warmth and sincerity. They had obviously carefully prepared and knew what they wished to achieve and they definitely excelled themselves. There were also good opportunities to get to know the other dancers too.

Helena Softley Eden

I can't recommend it highly enough to you should you ever get the opportunity to take part in a Movement Choir – be it online or in real life! It's rarely about performing to others, (although I have been part of a group that performed to a handful once) it's all about the **joy of dancing** for yourself and with others.

The Joy of Dancing : a review by Helena Softley Eden

On Thursday 29th May it was my pleasure to be a part of the celebrations on International Dance day by participating in a virtual Zoom dance arranged by the Laban Movement Dance Project. The theme for this delightful dance/movement piece was 'Hope' and was choreographed and led by Maggie Killingbeck, Susi Thornton and Janet Lunn.

Each section of the dance represented the events and experiences of this last year, through movement incorporating Laban fundamentals. We moved to 'Appalachian Spring VII Doppio movimento' by Aaron Copland (the section that many will recognise as 'The Lord of The Dance')

Some of the movement was 'set' but we were encouraged to improvise and create at several points throughout the piece. We began by depicting Spring – walking in meadows, appreciating new growth, birdsong, sunshine. We were encouraged to devise a short phrase based on those themes which we danced ourselves, then we teamed up with a partner (who we had met in the breakout rooms) and incorporated each others' ideas into a longer phrase. This represented one of the few benefits of lockdown – being in nature.

We also linked up with 3 or 4 others (again via break out rooms) and choreographed some movements in the planes, that we did in unison. Each group danced in a different plane and this represented forming groups with like-minded people and connecting with others via Zoom calls and other technologies commonly used in this last year!

We then had a few bars of music where we moved around quickly, rushing back and forth as if dashing off excitedly to get our first and second vaccinations!

This then led to our unbridled joy at the possibility of Covid restrictions being relaxed and we threw ourselves into that mood by working with the diagonals in an exuberant way.

We then realised that we still had to be careful so our movements became slower, binding our flow and becoming more reflective.

We all danced in unison for the last section of the dance – finding harmony through the quality of a three ring, reaching out to each other and culminating in opening our arms to the screen and therefore each other, in a virtual embrace.

It truly was a marvellous way to celebrate International Dance Day and my thanks goes out to Susi, Janet and Maggie for creating such a powerful and poignant piece. Even though we were all dancing in our own homes it really felt like we were connected.

We have all had to endure the challenges of the last year, and dancing together in this way really felt like it was a group experience, where we could support each other and reach out to each other across the airwaves.

The final embrace (pictured) was an emotional moment for me and felt almost as good as being in the same room with everybody. With luck that will become a reality in the not too distant future.

The feeling I believe we were all left with was hopefulness for the future. It was a truly uplifting experience, and I look forward to the next one!