



THE LABAN
ART OF MOVEMENT
GUILD
MAGAZINE

Price: Eight Shillings

FORTY-THIRD NUMBER
NOVEMBER 1969



Here is your symbol for
FESTIVAL YEAR

OFFICERS OF THE GUILD

President: SYLVIA BODMER	Vice-President: F. C. LAWRENCE
Chairman: JOAN RUSSELL	Vice-Chairman: MARGARET DUNN
Hon. Secretary: BETTY OSGATHORP 3 Patten Road, Wandsworth, SW18	Hon. Assistant Secretary: GILLIAN WILLIAMS 10 Buckingham Gardens, Hurst Road, W. Molesey, Surrey.
Hon. Treasurer: DONALD JENKINS 23 Plover Way, Bedford	Hon. Editor: ELIZABETH SMITH 3 Beech Grove, Burton-on-Stather Scunthorpe, Lincs.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Pat Bowen-West	Sheila Moore
Jean Carroll	Christine Plant
Olive Chapman	Kay Tansley
Mollie Davies	Lisa Ullmann (Past President)
Elisabeth Drake	Dawn Wells
David Henshaw	Lorna Wilson
June Layson	

ERRATA

In the May issue of the Magazine the name of the Vice-Chairman was printed as Margaret Donn. It should, of course, have been Margaret Dunn. We apologise.

The title of the thesis by Dr. Vi. Bruce is "Dance and Dance Drama in Education" and it is in the University of Leicester Library. This library also holds Dr. Bruce's thesis. "Communication Possibilities for Children with Major Learning Difficulties in Schools". The latter is, in part, in book form as "Awakening the Slower Third".

EDITORIAL

As we move towards the Guild Festival Year the significance and character of choral dancing will become increasingly a subject for discussion and experience. It is particularly appropriate that an as yet unpublished article by Laban can appear in this November issue as a fresh statement and stimulus.

It may seem to many less appropriate that the Magazine also contains the final article by Mr. Curl questioning Laban's philosophic foundations. Indeed there has been considerable doubt as to whether any of this series should have been published in this organ, but the first object of the Guild is, "to provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas". The too ready acceptance of beliefs is a common failing and it is not until they are called into question that we stir ourselves to defend and clarify them. Mr. Curl's articles have provoked much discussion and two excellent replies by Miss Jordan in May and Mr. Lange in this issue. Surely this is a good thing.

The most serious accusation levelled by Mr. Curl seems to be that Laban's philosophy tended towards mysticism. Miss Redfern's comment is worth recording. "What's wrong with being a mystic?" What indeed. Surely philosophy is concerned with ultimate reality. That Laban had a "spiritual apprehension of truths beyond our understanding" is our good fortune.

Followers of his work aspire towards these truths and in *Kaleidoscopia Viva* we can be sure that Geraldine Stephenson has created the means by which we can participate in "one of the most privileged functions of human personality".

It is with sincere regret that we have to report the deaths of Elsie Palmer who has been an active member of the Guild since its inception and of Hilda Brumof.

* Concise Oxford Dictionary definition of mysticism.

NOTES ON CHORAL DANCING

RUDOLF LABAN

Choral singing and choral speaking are well known, but choral dancing is very little practised. The idea of the choral art of movement is very old. It is even possible that the first dances of human beings were choral dances. In the process of individualisation people have lost the habit of expressing themselves in groups except in singing and orchestral music.

A number of dancers gathered into a group and performing together a work of the choral art of movement can produce effects which are not possible for the single dancer. These effects relate to more than the artistic effect given to the public. Certain forms of dancing have the aims of vitalising the dancers and possess, therefore, recreative and even educative value for the performer himself without special regard for the onlooker who might accidentally be present. Recreative choral dances are dance compositions which are simple enough to be performed by laymen. Choral dances as works of representative art will have more elaborate patterns, the significance and beauty of which are able to convey the idea of the dance to the onlooker.

In both cases however, there exists a common basis which can be found in the harmony of movement pervading any valuable form of dancing.

Choral dancing is of great benefit to the student of movement. One of the difficulties of expressing thoughts and feelings in movement is self-consciousness, the fear to show inner agitation freely. Most people consider the hiding of their emotions and thought under the impassive mask of immobility as a great asset of civilised men, but they will never learn to move efficiently and with beauty if they constantly repress their natural movement expression. The liberation from such repression which choral movement gives is one of the main sources of the exhilaration and pleasure gained in this form dancing. If everybody around us moves, there is no need of hiding, no cause for self-consciousness and fear. This experience can be made in the gay or even serious gathering of masses, whose common movement is not artistically organised. But as common shouting of a group of people differs from choral singing, so differs also the instinctive common rush of a mass of people from choral dancing.

Choral dances, no matter whether they are performed for the common pleasure of the participants or the benefit of an audience, are built up on principles similar to those governing solo dances. Group dances require a certain technique in which the individual agility of the members is well adapted to the movement expression of the whole. There exist significant contents of group dances

like the contents of individual dances, and these contents are expressed by definite forms of movement. The uniform rhythmical shaking of the whole body of the individual dancer is not yet a dance in the sense of a work of the art of movement. So is also the uniform performance and repetition of one rhythmic gesture of all the members of a group not yet a choral dance of artistic significance. The diversity of movement themes playing against each other, comparable to the counterplay of various groups of instruments in an orchestra, is the most highly developed form of choral dancing.

Community singing is well known as an expression and outlet of group sympathy. The same is experienced in community dancing of which choral dancing is a refined variety.

It is however, useful to warn against a danger of choral dancing which can easily arise, when the fearless self-expression and the indulgence in the free swinging of the individual bodies is taken as the sole purpose of such exercises. It must always be kept in mind, that choral dancing is a specific form of the art of movement, the works of which have to say something and, in the case of choral art, something which cannot be conveyed by a single individual. The effects produced by group movement offer obviously the possibility of a greater variety of counterplay than those produced by a single body. The members of the choral group, in contributing to the general effect, have to concentrate upon the relationships of their own with other people's efforts. As groups might play with other groups it is not only the sensitivity for the immediate movements but also for the movement qualities of the people playing a counterpart, which is needed. This thinking, feeling and moving in sympathy with others is a peculiarity of choral dancing which explains the great impact of this art form on the spectator. The beneficial effect on the personality of the individual dancer and the enhancement given to the group spirit makes choral dance a paramount means of education. The perfect unity of a group of choral dancers is a phenomenon which cannot be found elsewhere than in this art form. The capacity of sympathetic penetration into other people's minds has however, without doubt, repercussions on the behaviour in everyday life of persons who have assimilated the experience of choral dancing to a significant degree. To gain such experience was the main driving power behind the ritual dances of ancient times. In our time it is up to the creative invention of the modern choreographer to find contents of choral dances which are similarly inspiring for masses as were the communal conceptions of our ancestors. This is of course no easy task, yet we have found a solution in music, where our

composers and orchestras have been able to produce works of sound surely not less touching and not less unifying than the old dance rituals. Why should this not also be possible in choral speaking or choral dancing? Many people derive more pleasure from choral speaking than from community singing. There are also many who get the same or even a greater thrill out of community dancing of which choral dancing is the most highly developed form.

In conjunction with the fear of self-expression — and especially in bodily movement — there exists another barrier to the free development of choral dancing. Some people misunderstand the partaking in a communal effort as a loss of individual freedom. They think that communal dance is a merging into a crowd. In valuable choral dancing exactly the contrary takes place. An individual contributing to communal expression has to foster and to keep alert his most personal sensitivity for other people's mental and emotional attitude. He has not to merge into them, but to answer them with sympathy. The only difference is, that in ordinary life people are used to develop self-assertion in order to dominate others and if they don't succeed, they are apt to subdue themselves to a more powerful individual. In choral dancing neither domination nor obedience arises. The aim is communication and elevation into the highest level of vitality which the theme and content of the specific dance allows for.

This communication and adaptation in sympathetic group feeling is one of the most privileged functions of human personality.

1970 ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

GERALDINE STEPHENSON

In many areas of the country rehearsals have begun for the Festival next May. The presentation, "Kaleidoscopia Viva" is to be given TWO performances at 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

Please give your support by reserving seats for yourself and others. As I write this at the beginning of October, I know that one college in the North has already pinned lists on the board for students to sign for tickets and two weeks ago had fifteen signatures. This same college has also made a bargain with a bus company to transport students down to London and back again very cheaply indeed. You can do the same. Bring coaches of children, students and friends. Contact Youth Groups in your area, Girl Guides, Keep Fit Groups and Drama Organisations and interest them in this project. This is a great opportunity to spread further Laban's work and ideas.

It would be a kindly gesture to our more distant friends if those Guild Members connected with London organisations would book parties for the evening performance and leave the afternoon performance for those who have far to travel home.

Together with this Magazine you will receive the publicity leaflets for "Kaleidoscopia Viva". As a member of the Guild you are asked to distribute them to your friends or to interested organisations in your area. If you would like handbills or posters for display, please contact: Miss O. M. Chapman, 4 Langdale, The Avenue, Beckenham, Kent.

PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATIONS AND LABAN'S THEORY OF MOVEMENT

RODERYK LANGE, M.A.

The series of articles about Laban's philosophy published by Mr. Gordon Curl* certainly caused controversial thoughts among practitioners applying Laban's concepts of movement and dance to their work. If it could lead to a revision of some people's methods of teaching the "Art of Movement," it would be a benefit to the whole practice in that area. But Mr. Curl too often identifies wrong interpretations and misunderstood applications of Laban's concepts with his Theory of Movement itself. Unfortunately in Mr. Curl's articles there are many misunderstandings which may easily mislead a reader not sufficiently experienced and critical.

The first misunderstanding arises from a lack of respect for historical perspective in Mr. Curl's argument. One must take into consideration the fact that Laban's published works represent two different complexities. Nearly all of his writings until the year 1939 must be recognised as the manifests of an artist. It is thus understandable that he has represented the ideas of his epoch with all its current symbolic and mystic stresses. Some of these attitudes may perhaps not be acceptable in our contemporary period, as aesthetic values are constantly changing. But who of us would not recognise the real artistic values of that period in, for example, the masterpieces of Ibsen, Maeterlink and Strindberg, or the later Bauhaus activities and expressionistic art?

We may be not able to identify ourselves with the spirit of that epoch. Therefore it is necessary to translate what Laban says in those books into our own idiom — all the more necessary since Laban wrote in a very special kind of metaphoric German which was then a fashionable means of expression. I don't think that it is possible to translate these texts directly into other languages. It is obvious that Laban himself would have used a quite different sort of language if he had written his books today.

Laban's works published after 1939 refer to an altogether different area of his activities. He was trying to make a strict and clear statement of his findings in the field of Movement and Dance. During this later period he never again appeared as a performing artist or active choreographer. He concentrated exclusively on synthetic formulations of his life-long practical study of dance. To be exact he had already revealed this tendency in his book "Choreographie" published in 1926 in Jena. These

* Gordon F. Curl, *Philosophic Foundations, The Laban Art of Movement* Guild Magazine, Nov. 1966, May 1967, Nov. 1967, June 1968, Nov. 1968

facts clearly indicate that Laban was both an artist of his time and simultaneously an intellectually predisposed theoretician. Analysing his work one must distinguish between these two aspects of his creativeness, and never identify his personal attitudes as an artist of the expressionistic period of European art with his amazingly objective exposition of the principles of movement and dance which are based on a much wider and more universal background.

Mr. Curl refers several times to the distinguished author and aesthetician Prof. Langer. It is obvious that all her critical comments are concerned with the mystic and symbolic chaos of the expressionistic period in dance. She refers on a few occasions only to Laban's personal expression of his artistic experiences. At no time does she analyse his books on Theory of Movement — for the simple reason that they were partly not yet published (or were not available) when Prof. Langer was discussing the different aesthetic trends in European dance history. So what Mr. Curl quotes in support of his opinions has in fact no connection with Laban's fundamentally valid achievements in the field of dance and movement.

As Laban himself stated, he never pretended to appear as a philosopher or scholar, so we cannot logically expect from him an academic treatise on philosophy. It is also obvious that it is not the field of philosophy, as such, that he is investigating. If he shows interest in Plato and Pythagoras it is only in connection with their investigations into space analysis — and it would be amazing if Laban failed to show this interest.

After all, as an artist he was free to present his thoughts on those investigations in any way he liked, and to follow any beliefs he chose. Even if we agree that he followed some neo-platonic or neo-pythagorean ideas, this does not exclude the possibility of his making objective findings. The name of Kepler, very often introduced by Mr. Curl, is in itself the best evidence for this. Many of Kepler's fantastic ideas may be today discredited, but after all they led him to the discovery of the three basic rules of planetary movements around the sun. One cannot measure the activities and achievements of scientists from previous centuries by our contemporary criteria. In their epoch those people were certainly progressive in science. On the other hand modern psychology gives us many examples of apparently irrational attitudes and associations resulting in objective findings in many fields of contemporary knowledge.* This is all quite normal, and there is nothing wrong about it.

* See, for example, M. L. von Franz, *Science and the Unconscious* — in Carl G. Jung, *Man and His Symbols*, Aldus Books, London 1964, pp. 304-310.

Because of all this I would not agree that study of Laban's Movement Theory requires some specific philosophic foundations. One may follow and accept Laban's philosophic comments on spatial structures and their internal relations to each other, or one may regard them as Laban's very personal comments, and even disagree with them. But what matters is his Theory of Movement, and there is no doubt that nobody has yet produced a better solution, explaining in an objective way the structures and functions of movement in space as explored by Man.

What matters also is that Laban's thinking covers all stages of Man's development as mover and dancer. Thus it is amazing to find again and again what a very modern attitude he reveals towards the dynamic aspect of those developments, and his synthetic statements can be verified at any time by the results achieved in modern history of culture. It is enough to compare Laban's ideas in that field with the findings of scholars of the standing of J. G. Frazer, R. H. Lowie and B. Malinowski.

Laban's brief condensed article entitled "Dance in General"† explains dance developments much more objectively and rationally than most of the published histories of dance. There is no doubt that Laban's opinions on dance development are a major contribution to the establishment of modern choreology. This clear understanding of the place of dance development in the organic complexity of human culture is most significant in Laban's Theory of Movement. This is what Lisa Ullman identified as the philosophic foundations, on occasions quoted by Mr. Curl, which are necessary for a proper understanding of Laban's concepts of movement. So what really matters in a study of his Movement Theory is the knowledge of how Man's culture has developed and of Man's activities in movement and dance against that background. Today that background is provided by modern dance ethnology and the history of dance culture.

It is obvious that in spite of their progress in civilisation and technology, human beings have not lost their physical bodies, and although he has to some extent created his own artificial environment, Man has not lost his connection with his natural environment. His physical body like any other three dimensional object is governed by universal laws of space and time. It is therefore not surprising that in Laban's Theory the movement potentialities of the human body in space are analysed in three dimensional terms. Laban also showed in a space model the different relations existing between contrasting movement actions thus revealing the specific functions of each which evolve.

† Laban R., *Dance in General*, The Laban Art of Movement Guild Magazine, 26 May, 1961.

But since human beings have not only a physical structure and mechanism but also an inner life, it follows that human movement is a psycho-physical complexity, and the revelation of Man's inner attitudes and ideas is most relevant in movement. To this end Laban worked out, together with F. C. Lawrence, the theory of "Effort". It is obvious that exploring the subjective side of human life one can't apply measures and numbers. Instead Laban confronts the two extreme poles of a given movement factor, taking for granted that any manifestation in human movement will be proportionally placed somewhere closer to or further from those extreme poles. This can be considered as the most objective approach to the subjective element in human movement.

It is absurd to identify Laban's concepts of movement in space with some sort of narrow mathematical approach. Using spatial models Laban simply makes clear the dynamic relations between their different contrasting points. These points were introduced only for orientation, they do not in any way restrict the execution of the movement. The anatomical structure of the human body requires ideally the sphere as a surrounding model, and that is what Laban obviously respects.

In his spatial analysis of movement Laban observes the element of time as a simultaneous occurrence, and his approach to this problem could not be more objective. This is why the system of notation he created following his discoveries is perhaps the most compact notation of movement ever known. (Kinetography).

Thus it is amazing that Mr. Curl wants us to be angry with models of cubes and icosahedrons standing around in schools where the "Art of Movement" is taught. Nobody would take this sort of attitude to the globe model of the earth in geographical departments or geometrical models in mathematical departments.

Among the different shapes and forms of human movement some of them, as for example the circle, have a universal application in all times among all living beings. As the centre of a circle forms a natural focal point, it has an immediate social significance for a community performing for example a circle dance, for this gives everybody an equal position. Nobody could possibly invent a more appropriate shape. These facts are quite natural and I wonder why we should not be able to accept this simple truth? The role of spirals and figures of eight is only a further development of possibilities in our exploration of space, and in these shapes we are able to experience the three dimensional aspect of movement in space in the most extensive way.

It is clear that Laban's starting point is the objective aspect of facts occurring in space and time. That is the most significant part of his theory, and we need not concern ourselves overmuch with Laban's views belonging to his first period of activities. His early artistic credo is not necessarily connected directly with the results he achieved in the second period of his life. It is surprising that Mr. Curl so very seldom refers to the real substance of Laban's Theory of Movement. For a careful reader who has some understanding of movement and dance practice it must be evident that his theory is the sum of endless observations and experiences coming from his practical involvement. In his synthetic concept of movement Laban proved his genius as an observer. We know that there are today many scientific disciplines relying solely on observation, which leaves no doubt that such an approach can be entirely scientific.

Nor can one agree with the accusation that Laban's movement theory is of speculative character. As we have said before, his concept of movement in space and time is clearly stated and can be proved by experience. He uses geometrical models. Well, there can be no question that movement having its three-dimensional aspect will be associated with geometrical forms. Obviously in practice one will use these space models only for reference. We know they present the extreme and ideal possibilities of movement activities in space, and we know that innumerable solutions lie between two extremes. In everyday life only some specific parts of those models will be exploited by our movements depending on the different specialisations of our activities. But we shall never identify models with the actualities of real life.

Laban's ideas concerning crystals are to be understood in the same way. He quite certainly did not intend to create a new system of anatomical analysis of the human body. His references to crystals in connection with the human body are related only to the functional aspect of human movement, and certainly Laban has never directly identified the human body with crystals!

As well as his physical awareness Man is aware of his inner life, and differs from the animals because of the possibility of spiritual development. This is why at such a very early stage dance became an art and thus belongs to human spiritual culture. In dance as in art in general, we shall find features not connected with human needs of everyday life. There will always be present abstract ideas reflecting the necessities of the inner human life. Accordingly there are different qualities of human movement visible in dance, and harmony of movement will be relevant only in dance. It is movement raised to the status of poetry, and thus the whole cultural background and spiritual content determine any dance form.

A further misunderstanding appears in Mr. Curl's comments on Laban's Space Harmony. Whilst Laban compares the *relationships* occurring in musical scales with those in movement scales, he did not identify their *structures*. Laban's standard movement scales for example, are not constructed according to the progressive character of the diatonic scale in music, but are based on the relationships between the most contrasting points in the space models. If the number three is here so significant it is not because it is a magic number but because it refers to the three dimensions of movement in space. If there is a symmetrical element in the sequences it is due to the structure of the human body.

Without any doubt dance gestures basically consist of expressive elements of human movement. Their symbolic meaning is a secondary development and is very often connected with an artistic convention which tends to alienate them from the natural movement expression.

Human beings all over the world have a lot in common in spite of differences in development. Anthropological researches show again and again how deeply rooted some patterns of culture appear in life. So it is difficult to understand how Mr. Curl could possibly suggest the idea that the dance of primitive man is less human than the dance of our contemporary civilised societies. There are some rules in cultural development which are valid even in the life of most sophisticated societies, nor is it possible to depart from them. We know from our every day life how many survivals from the past still have their significance in social life. This is a part of normal human development and if we are to remain human we can't alienate ourselves from that context.

What is more, it is obvious today in many ways that the historical development of Man is to some extent mirrored in the individual development of a child. It is not a coincidence that the mentality of primitive people is very often comparable with the mentality of children. It has its own logic and limited range of experience, but it is deeply human.

These facts were very clear to Laban and one can find this understanding in all his works. That is the real background of his Theory of Movement, only one must be able to distinguish between the convention and style in which he expresses himself and the real facts he sets out to present. As we have said earlier the language of metaphors which he uses was connected with a particular period, and furthermore his comments are concerned with some of his very personal views. This does not affect the real value of the facts he discovered.

Laban goes back to the origin of things in dance and movement. This is surely a right and progressive attitude. In his concept the very early stages of dance development are included, going back even to the biological function of dance. It is also obvious that without a knowledge of the past it is not possible to mould the future of dance, and it is not even possible to understand properly the contemporary state of things. In the process of technical development Man has achieved much, but on the other hand he has had to pay for it in the diminution of his natural capacities. The damage this has done to human development is obvious today, and many attempts were made to provide some counterbalance in civilised life. Laban's contribution is here a very specific one. His idea was to enable people of the present day to explore again both their physical and mental capacities by means of that primordial instrument, the human body in dance. Laban's "Modern Educational Dance" shows how the basic aspects of dance can be applied to the process of children's education. Unfortunately his idea is very often confused with a specific technique of modern theatrical dance.

In fact Mr. Curl's article missed the point since the only aspect which was really significant for the author, namely the application of Laban's theories to school work, was not properly dealt with. It is clear that lack of methods in the teaching of "Art of Movement" is no evidence of any inadequacy in Laban's Theory of Movement and should not be allowed to detract from his real achievements.

It is true that often the teacher may not be quite clear *why* he has to follow some scale or other or *why* he is applying different parts of Laban's theories to his school practice. It certainly can not be accepted that real knowledge should be replaced by myths and methodically conducted exercises and studies by a state of uncontrolled self indulgence. That is a point which may require further attention. There is no need to replace the real content of human spiritual culture with clouds of pseudo-mystical and dilettante ideas. But that was certainly not Laban's concept of his "Art of Movement"!

It is also a misunderstanding to attempt to identify Laban's theory of movement with a recipe for a "universal" formula of movement and dance. What really is universal are the *principles of movement and dance* that Laban has discovered. Any mover will have to follow some conventions, consciously or unconsciously. And it is strange to attempt a "neutral" execution of human movement. We are so deeply connected with our heritage! Everybody will produce different versions of the same patterns. But obviously the *principles*, as universal human truths, will be applicable at all times to all kinds of interpretations.

It is not true that Laban's Theory of Movement and the different areas of movement investigation that Laban established are confined to this country only. Nowadays anthropological research into dance all over the world is based on Laban's concepts. It will be enough here to mention such examples as the works on structural dance analysis as performed by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences or by the Dance Section of the International Folk Music Council; works on dance research as performed in Poland, Jugoslavia, Germany, France; the big Cantometrics Project of Columbia University (USA) has also included a section using Laban's methods to investigate the cultural significance of dance. There is no need to say that Laban's Theory has influenced educational work in many countries. But what is most significant is the fact that his methods of movement investigation have for the first time provided a reasonable basis for modern choreology.

Laban's Theory of Movement has made possible a scientific approach to human movement and dance. It is obvious that without proper knowledge no proper practice in the field of movement and dance is possible. What, for example, would contemporary music mean today without the knowledge provided by modern musicology? Obviously one cannot dance "scientifically" but one can establish a science of dance. And the most important point in approaching Laban's Theory is to respect the whole complex of knowledge about dance.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF LABAN'S MAIN WORKS

- 1920 Die Welt des Tänzers (The Dancer's World), Walter Seifert, Stuttgart.
- 1926 Des Kindes Gymnastik und Tanz (Gymnastic and Dance for the Child) Stalling Oldenburg.
- 1926 Gymnastik und Tanz für Erwachsene (Gymnastic and Dance for Adults), Stalling, Oldenburg.
- 1926 Choreographie (Choreography) Eugen Diederichs, Jena.
- 1928 Schrifftanz (Script Dance) Universal Editions, Vienna, New York.
- 1935 Ein Leben für den Tanz (A Life for the Dance) Karl Reissner Verlag, Dresden.
- 1947 Effort, (co-author with F. C. Lawrence) Macdonald & Evans, London.
- 1948 Modern Educational Dance, Macdonald & Evans, London.
- 1950 Mastery of Movement on the Stage, Macdonald & Evans, London.
- 1956 Principles of Dance and Movement Notation, Macdonald & Evans, London.
- 1960 The Mastery of Movement, 2nd Ed. revised by Lisa Ullmann Macdonald & Evans, London.
- 1966 Choreutics, Annotated and edited by Lisa Ullmann, Macdonald & Evans, London.

RELAXATION THROUGH MOVEMENT

LISA ULLMANN — Director, Art of Movement Centre

Is it not a contradiction in terms to speak of relaxing through movement? How can physical movement provide relaxation, that is to remit effort, if effort is just the thing which is needed for moving. Do we defeat our ends at the outset or can we justify our pursuits? Perhaps it helps to look a little closer into the nature of both movement and relaxation in order to see their relationship.

Let us consider movement first. Readily enough we can recognise the motions of our body and its mechanical implications. Similar to the function of a mobile crane, with which objects are lifted and transported, our muscles lever the parts of our skeleton carrying them and shifting them about. The motions of the crane have to be organised by a master-mind, the crane driver, in order to do a definite job, and so have the motions of our body to be co-ordinated for the purpose of accomplishing our human tasks.

It is the privilege of the human brain to be able to know the workings of a pulley, a lever and all the mechanisms that transmit or transform motion, but does this suffice to drive an engine? Wherever we look, even in our computerised age, the ultimate beginning of any driving power is the act of moving and our body represents a well assembled unit of engine and mind which consciously or unconsciously follows the rules of motion.

Movement is a natural phenomenon of life and can be observed in all living beings as both, a series and a composite of inner and outer motions. What is more, it cannot only be observed but also experienced as a reality in our body and we can become consciously aware of its rhythmical flow and learn to control and harmonize it.

Now, what about relaxation? Usually this is associated with loosening concentration, slackening effort and assuming a state of inactivity and rest. Yet, we all know how much relaxation of body and mind we can derive from strenuous activity if only because it is a different one from the usual and happens in a different environment possibly also in company with other people and as a result of a motivation unlike an habitual one. In other words, we have exchanged one set of demands for another and this produces a kind of counterpole which allows for movement to arise.

From this it appears that relaxation can be achieved through movement between two different kinds of activity; may they be work and play, physical and mental, individual and social, concentrated and dispersed. Whatever sets of activity combine they must be sufficiently different from one another so that change—that is movement—may take place to provide relaxation.

Relaxation is, therefore, rather a process than a state involving effort in a series of operations of an inner and an outer nature. At times we may play it easy whilst at others we may stress our endeavour to progress, attain, change, develop and when there is a rhythmical flux between the two kinds of efforts, the easy and the stressed ones, a favourable condition for relaxation is given.

Take, for instance, breathing, the most natural rhythm of which we can become conscious in our own body and which we can learn to control and vary in order to enhance its function. The whole phase of inhalation, exhalation and maybe periods of pauses during which the lungs are kept either filled with air or emptied of it enlists subtle increases and decreases of effort intensity which as a rhythmic unit contains both exertion and recovery. The presence of these two factors, their interplay, alternation and individual recurrences in an organic manner set off a flow of movement which is apt to produce relaxation, particularly when it is consciously experienced, thus giving us the chance of becoming aware of our regenerative power.

I should like to introduce here the idea of dance as a recreative activity. In dance the movement flow through our body is intensified, occurring between stillnesses and is unfolding in a rhythmical scheme which corresponds to the mood of the dancer, the occasion or the effect it is intended to have. Recreative dance has the aim to give relaxation to the participants from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. But why dance in order to relax? There are so many ways of obtaining relaxation and recreating oneself. When looking around what people do in order to relax there is no end of conscious or unconscious ingenuity in this respect. Many forms of recreation are dictated by individual taste, need and momentary inclination. One may refer to these as "uncontrolled" recreations. "Controlled" recreations should consist of a certain amount of planned activities of an equilibrating character which give compensation to the bodily and mental strain mainly caused by the lopsided claim made on our various functions. Dancing, if rightly used, can provide controlled recreation.

In everyday life the movements we are required to perform are in the main serving to do a practical job. Sometimes this is a strenuous one requiring a great amount of persistent muscular tension in certain parts of our body and constant mental concentration. At others the mental and physical demand is so minimal that the body becomes flabby and the mind bored. The job to be done is the important factor and there are no hints forthcoming as to preservation and recharging of energy other than a general instinctive reaction.

In dance, movements have a life of their own, and the body is engaged in a seemingly useless occupation. The dancers appear to have found refuge in a world of dreams and fantasy in which they enjoy the movement play of their own body and limbs for its own sake. Dance is an art and as such, along with all the other arts, it enlists the human faculty of becoming aware of the life within as well as without and creating a fruitful relationship between the two.

Once again I mention the flow of movement as that criterion which makes it possible for relaxation to arise. This time it streams between the inner and the outer being with its poles of meditation, contemplation and concentration at the one end and at the other action efficiency and practical achievement. The shapes and patterns which our body creates in space when dancing are filled with self-generated rhythms and are nothing but reflections of an inner world. As they assume an organised form within the structure of a dance they seem as it were, to gain the power to refresh psychic energy thus setting a regenerating cycle into motion. There is no competition in this, therefore, a relaxed attitude can prevail and a feeling of wholeness can be attained, giving a sense of achievement through the activity itself.

Dance in the recreative sense is basically a social activity. From the very beginnings dance has been the central focus of festive occasions and when practised for a recreative purpose a group of people performing together can achieve certain beneficial effects which for a single dancer to achieve is not possible.

Dance is a form of self-expression and this alone can have an equilibrating influence on the overstimulation with which our present-day civilisation bombards us. When done as a group activity the vitalising and at the same time relaxing qualities of dancing are greatly enhanced through the experience of an increased variety of relationships.

Early this century Rudolf Laban introduced choral dancing as a recreative activity. Whilst choral singing and choral speaking were well-known he felt that through the process of individualisation people had forgotten the advantages of expressing themselves in group dancing. Choral dances had to be compositions simple enough for anyone to join in and to enjoy. They had to be designed to have a harmonising effect on the participants through a well balanced choice of themes and well related rhythms and structures. But the problem of communication of many different personalities in a non-verbal medium has always been a challenging yet stimulating feature of choral dancing. At first fear and self-consciousness can

be frustrating, but as soon as people realise that everybody around is moving and involved in some form of self-realisation fear is relaxed and self-consciousness turns into absorption in the common activity.

The entering into relationship with other people requires of the individual an awareness of his role within the whole and an immediate response in order to make the situation live and develop. The way to such an awareness is through inner relaxation and stillness when the pulsation of the group rhythm which supersedes the personal one can be sensed and the group form perceived. In a choral dance, the flow of movement, sparked off by the individual dancers, is formed into a rhythmical structure which has an extra-personal character. This gives an opportunity to each participant to be lifted out of himself and to have the stimulating experience of personal contribution to a common achievement. Such an experience can help to relax the fetters which tend to tighten our personality in the battles of survival and free the uninhibited strength of which the human being is capable.

There seem to be manifold ways for movement to provide relaxation ranging from physical aspects to those of interpersonal relationships. From wherever one starts the total being must be involved in the process and the movement must be organised to flow in a harmonious rhythm within a well balanced structure. In this way a natural resiliency can be safeguarded unifying our inner and our outer self and this, surely, leads to real relaxation.

Sections of this article were published in the Times Educational Supplement of 11th July, 1969, under the title "Content through Movement".

IDA M. WEBB

Principal Lecturer in Physical Education,
Chelsea College of Physical Education.

"All great men have their imitators" and Per Henrik Ling and Rudolf von Laban are no exceptions, but it is "the wisdom of circles, a wisdom which has its roots in magic and is as old as the hills" that makes a comparative study of the contributions of these named men to Physical Education, meaningful and rewarding. Both pioneers were influenced by the "Natural Philosophy of Ancient Greece" and concerned for the harmonization of the individual, the recognition of body and mind as a unity.

Per Henrik Ling, "Father of Swedish Gymnastics", was born in Smaland in 1776, the son of a clergyman and spent his early life in a Middle Class atmosphere. His thoughts and writings were further affected and modified by the Romantic Movement of the 18th and early 19th centuries and he became a national figure and a leader of the "New Culture." He demonstrated, in his own lifetime, that Physical Education is an integral part of Education and every respected leader of society recognised this fact. His contribution therefore was twofold, directly to Physical Education through the Theory and Practice of Gymnastics and indirectly as a Leader of the Romantic Movement.

Rudolf von Laban, "Father of Movement Education" was born in Bratislava in 1879, the son of a general. He also spent his early life in a Middle Class environment. His thoughts and writings stemmed from a childhood interest in unusual designs and patterns in space formed by mobile human beings and his ideas were further affected and modified by his experiences in other Art spheres. He demonstrated, in his own lifetime, that human movement is a language which we all speak and that through movement we are able to communicate with each other and with an audience. "In the dance, he saw, a world in which modern man can find himself where he can exercise his faculties of doing, thinking and feeling in an integrated condition, where he can experience physical and spiritual phenomena and where values are created which help to give him a basis for positive living." Primarily Laban's contribution to Physical Education has been effected through the media of Educational Dance and Gymnastics.

The differences, the similarities, the parallel qualities, gifts and virtues of the two men are immediately apparent, but the logical development of ideals and the implementation of visions according to the scientific laws of the 19th and 20th centuries, the eras in which they respectively lived, serve to clarify the foundations of their work. That over one hundred years separates their lives is

of significance, for the former provided the stage for the latter to continue the development and increase of knowledge of the common elements of movement.

Per Henrik Ling's work arose in Physical Education, in relation to the military needs of Sweden in the early 19th century. He was troubled by the poor physical state of health of his fellow countrymen while Rudolf von Laban was intrigued by "the moving pattern of human figures as a fascinating study for a life's work."

Ling a poet, a dramatist; Laban a person of visionary gifts, a genius ahead of his time in "his grasp of men and the universe". Ling a scientist, a physical educationist, concerned for the application of science to gymnastics; Laban curious, a magnetic, dynamic power with vast resources of creative imagination, "without which, few discoveries of importance are made". Ling a fencer, a master and teacher of foreign languages, the designer of "Free Standing Exercises"; Laban a man of intellect, a practical thinker, a philosopher, the designer of "Movement Choirs". Ling, the creator of Swedish Gymnastics, categorised as Military, Remedial, Educational and Aesthetic; Laban, "the chief theoretician of the free dance." Ling, serious, sensitive, affectionate, romantic, an ardent patriot; Laban meditator, catalyst, artist, wanderer and an exile. Ling influenced by Pestalozzi and by the Sagas of the Norsemen; Laban influenced by the writings of Jung and Freud. Ling concerned with the physical, aimed to revive the vigour of youth; Laban concerned with the psychomatic aimed to rehabilitate man through movement. Ling, an original deliberator explored and realised in concrete form gymnastic exercises with and without apparatus; Laban, a self trained observer, explored and realised in concrete form those visions he grasped and eventually formulated as movement concepts. Ling devoted his life to "corrective gymnastics" and studied anatomy and physiology that he might better understand the working of the human body, a remedial investigator; Laban devoted his life to creative exploration and scientific analysis of the movement of man, a motion investigator. Ling's preoccupation with isolated exercises led to the establishment of his rules for "Educational Gymnastics" based on the "Laws of the Human Body", Laban's exploration and development of the principles of harmony led to the discovery that all movement is of two kinds, "Functional" and/or "Expressive". Both men based their work on the principles of motion of "Time" and "Space" but their attitudes towards these factors differed in that Ling used "Time" and "Space" in a clear cut, directional and objective approach to exercise, whereas Laban was concerned with "How" the movement occurred in "Space", the subjective content of the action. Laban's concept of "Effort" included the motion factors of "Weight" and "Flow". Effort the inner

impulse that originates any movement performed by an individual, that gives expression to the action and in the metre of physical activity—Time factor, quick and slow, sudden/sustained, Space factor, straight and roundabout, direct/flexible, Weight factor, strong and light, firm/fine touch. Flow factor, stop and go, bound/free, which characterize personal actions. The elements of movement are therefore derived from physical factors and recognised by Ling and Laban as of prime importance in motor activity. Laban further emphasized the inter-relatedness of space rhythm and effort rhythm as observed in the performance of every movement.

Ling, the enthusiastic founder of the Royal Central Gymnastic Institute in Stockholm; Laban the co-founder of the Art of Movement Centre at Addlestone. Ling the author of manuals on gymnastics and fencing; Laban the author of books on "Effort" and "Movement in dance, education, industry and leisure".

In evaluating the deeds of great men, Diana Jordan says, "It is a common failing of man that he tends to pull apart the wholeness of new concepts in a destructive manner of criticism . . .". Ling had his critics, for example, Lindhart of Denmark claimed that the classification of Swedish Gymnastics was based on a mistaken idea. To organise a stock of exercises, which could have their effects on the body controlled and predicted, was without scientific support. Further, he accused Ling of being no anatomist or physiologist, although he had studied both subjects at Lund University. Lindhart contended that Ling's "Carriage Gymnastics" showed no evidence of knowledge about the human body and he concluded that Ling hovered around such subjects for psychological reasons. G. F. Curl, in looking for a setting for Laban's philosophy, had his findings confirmed in "Choreutics". The Pythagorean tradition "is a way of life", "a mixture of myth, religion and mathematics" and it is not difficult to understand the continuing influence of Platonic ideals into the 20th century. Nor is it hard to recognise the ease with which assumptions can be made—Greek influence—Q.E.D. mystic—proven fact? conjecture? only Laban's personal writings contain the truth, if he committed such thoughts to paper.

Ling's General Laws of Physical Development stress the unfolding of the powers of the human being, both mental and physical and are dependent on organisation. The laws of gravitation determine the limits of any movement of the body. Simple things are the most difficult to apprehend, they require deep study but ultimately ensure correct performance. Laban based his work on the natural processes of human growth and development although G. F. Curl maintains Laban had five foundation stones, namely:

“Dance as a Divine Power, The Reigen or Circle Dance, Unity and Ecstasy, The Crystal and Harmony”. Curl also says, “We shall follow the score of Orphic music yet further until we find its modulation in all embracing harmony of movement.” To Ling, “What music (that is the harmonious development of the intellectual and spiritual being) is to the inner man, gymnastics is to the framework that encloses his mind and spirit.” “The body, whose different parts are not in harmony, is not in harmonious accord with the mind” and “the organism can only be said to be perfectly developed when its several parts are in mutual harmony, corresponding to different individual predispositions.” Harmony of movement includes concord and discord, as well as changes of tension and Laban discovered the inherent harmony that exists in man’s movement—the natural integration of effort and shape that can be used for the development of body-mind unity as in educational dance or as a therapeutic agent for the restoration of balance in personality disorders.

The outstanding qualities possessed by Ling were patience to explore problems and determination to study, an independent thinker possessed of rich mental gifts; the secret of Laban was “his simplicity and clearness of purpose”. When viewed from this angle “There is no mysticism in Laban’s ideas” but G. F. Curl maintains, “the assumption that a child by means of certain spatial attempts to identify himself with the infinite or achieve a union with the whole cosmos, must be the most mystical of all Laban’s underlying educational ideas.” Yet Laban inspired people with his own teaching, he was a great teacher. The narrow, purely academic approach to “his” theories and “his” body of knowledge was not tolerated, but it is a compliment that research students consider it important to probe for a deep underlying philosophy and gratifying that an acceptable answer is available. Critical examination of a pioneer’s work allows greater appreciation of the intrinsic value of the already observable facts.

Ling’s work re-educated the individual’s posture, it had a curative value through improving faults and led to bodily development, while Laban’s work re-educates people’s sense of movement by means of a creative approach and provides a tool for the gaining of self knowledge and self mastery. Ling’s Swedish Gymnastics formed the basis for many syllabuses of Physical Education for over one hundred years. His work was revered, taught as he directed in the early years, but with the passing of time, adapted, changed and ultimately discarded for Modern Educational Dance and Gymnastics based on “Movement” principles.

It is perhaps too early to fully evaluate the contribution of Laban to Physical Education. That his work can stand close scrutiny is to be commended, that it can be developed is to his credit, for, as Diana Jordan has written, “enlightened pioneers in any field of discovery never represent or claim any static formula. They point the way forward.” Earlier, Ling had said, “it is difficult to start anything new and usually easier simply to prepare the way. Easiest of all is to take care of and preserve the finished work. All the same, the preserver does not think of the creator but only of his own troubles, I too, shall be forgotten. However, I pray to God that the doctors and educationists of the future may extend and improve my experiments and thus make gymnastics as important to the Northerner as it was to Plato, Hippocrates and Galen.” Laban re-echoed these thoughts when he challenged educationists of this country. “Multitudes (of people) are needed—they must stick to it through thick and thin.”

The circle has moved full cycle and we as disciples, as explorers, as students, as practitioners are left to further the work of Rudolf von Laban through extending the study of “Human Movement”. Human movement, now taken as the core and foundation for present day Physical Education to replace the central rock formed by Per Henrik Ling’s Swedish Gymnastics from which all other branches of Physical Education stemmed.

Ling gained an understanding of the human body that he might discover its needs and then select and apply gymnastic exercises intelligently. He left his book, “General Principles of Gymnastics” in fragmentary form for his successors to clarify and publish. Laban gained an understanding of human movement through evaluating the unconscious, spontaneous shadow movements of man. He also led Physical Educationists to consider the flow of movement in contrast to Ling’s stylised sequences, as the essence of Modern Educational Dance and Gymnastics. It is said that he has left many unpublished manuscripts and documents for his successors to translate and edit.

Art and Science meet, unite and enlighten the movementologist. Rudolf von Laban kindled the flame and set the wheel in motion for 20th century Physical Educationists. He was a unique builder of bridges, an intuitive personality, a versatile discoverer, a synthesist, an improviser of unlimited resources, a caricaturist, a painter, a founder of kinetography; but above all he was a very humble man.

In the compilation of this comparison quotations have been freely used from articles in:

Impulse 1958;
The New Era 1959;
Focus on Dance II 1962;
L.A.M.G.M. Dec. 1954, Nov. 1963, Nov. 1966, May 1967,

Nov. 1967, June 1968, Nov. 1968, May 1969;
and are duly acknowledged.

Further references:

The Theory of Gymnastics—Lindhalt.
A Guide to the History of Physical Education—Leonard.
Women's Physical Education in Gt. Britain 1800-1966 with special reference to teacher training—Webb.

The script was constructively criticised and the detail checked by Miss H. Corlett, Principal Lecturer in the Art and Science of Movement, Chelsea College of Physical Education. This assistance is also acknowledged.

GORDON F. CURL

Nonington College of Physical Education

FOREWORD

To the student unfamiliar with Classical Philosophy, Rudolf Laban's cosmic ideas on "religious exercise", "reigen", "crystals", "unity", "ecstasy" and "harmony" (outlined in our earlier articles), must seem mystical and esoteric in the extreme. Such ideas, it is hard to believe, have very much connection with current practice in schools or colleges. Yet we should err grievously if we dismissed them as irrelevant; they have functioned as the *vigor matrix*, the spur of Laban's outstanding achievements and are the grass roots of all that has since flowered under the title of the Art of Movement.

In the light of Laban's success, is it necessary to unveil the hidden mysteries of his personal philosophy? Is it necessary, even in the interests of future development in the Art of Movement, to probe into the underlying assumptions. "*It is always profitable*", writes one educational critic, "*to attempt to trace to their source the ideas which inspired a prophet, for there alone is to be found the secret of the strength of their influence in his teachings*" (FW). And such is the case with Rudolf Laban. We must diligently scour his early writings—particularly his early German works—in order to "trace to their source" the ideas which inspired him to create his great theories of "Space Harmony" and "Effort". No adequate appraisal, or comparative study of Laban and his work, is remotely possible without the closest scrutiny of "Die Welt des Tänzers", "Des Kindes Gymnastik und Tanz", "Gymnastik und Tanz für Erwachsene", "Choreographie" and "Ein Leben für den Tanz". It is in these books that we shall discover—half hidden—Laban's fundamental philosophy of Movement.

We may recall that Miss Ullmann in her Presidential Address some few years ago, reminded us with considerable conviction, that "it must not be forgotten, that serious study (of Laban's investigations) requires a philosophic foundation"—that we must "see the human being in the context of the cosmos". Now, the fact that Pythagorean and Ancient Cosmologies form the very base of that context, suggests that they must be accepted as paramount fields of study for any "serious" student of Laban's life's work.

From our comments in previous articles, we should have to admit to an ever-widening gap between the underlying philosophy and the practice of Laban's work, and it is a constant temptation to swing our attention exclusively to the urgent appraisal of present-day problems. But this temptation, at this stage, we must try to resist, for the detailed examination of the contemporary Art of Movement necessarily *follows* the examination of underlying

assumptions. Only in this sequence will we discover the necessary historical context of our present work.

History is alive with examples of wide discrepancies between theory and practice; old beliefs, superstitions and "mystic metaphysics" tend to cling like drowning men to the activities they have spawned. But we know their strangle-hold only hinders free progressive development. New life must needs cut adrift from outworn values (once they are recognised as such), and live according to its own "laws". Such "laws" must needs become explicit—at least in the case of modern educational practice.

PLATO'S "TIMAEUS"

A RALLYING POINT

Perhaps the most difficult task of the student of Laban's philosophy, is to find a point of orientation in the mysterious doctrines of "circularity", "crystals", "harmony" and the like, together with the widely scattered and wildly speculative theories of anatomy, physiology, kinesiology and psychology, permeating as they do, all his early works. But a focus does exist, and one which, when fully understood, provides a rallying point for a vast collection of seemingly disconnected and incomprehensible theory. This focus is to be found in that Ancient Myth of Creation—"The Timaeus".

But before entering into some discussion of this complicated but fascinating Pythagorean Cosmology, we must first look to our sources of reference.

A. V. Coton, author of "The New Ballet" (1947)—one time ballet critic and historian (also the biographer of Kurt Jooss) writes at length:

"Laban's point of departure seems most obviously, to have been the Platonic view of the Cosmos, for from mathematical and scientific hypotheses advanced in Plato's work (notably the Timaeus) is developed his enquiry into the nature and purpose of bodily movement, and the mental and neural impulses which guide and shape it . . . p. 30.

. . . The investigations covered on analysis of Platonic teaching, for, Laban felt, certain of Plato's observations on proportional interrelations between all forms of life, should offer a clue to the discovery of the basic laws of bodily movement . . . The tensions to which all parts of the body could be subjected, in relation to the maximum amount of air space the body could occupy, seemed likely to be a fixed quantity defined by proportional relations . . . The space element, the regularised mathematical shape that absolutely expresses the harmonious correlation existing between all possible movements of the head, limbs and torso, is the icosahedron. This figure is one of Plato's four regular solids . . . p. 31."

Coton more recently writes:

"When Jooss and I were discussing this aspect of Laban, he referred me to what he then described as "*the key to the whole idea*"—Plato's "*Timaeus*" . . . This I wrestled with at the time and felt that (together with all the discussions I'd had with Jooss, Leeder, and others connected) I had a pretty clear idea of the matter." (CSRL App. v)

And Jooss himself, in a recent interview states:

" . . . he was very much influenced by the "Timaeus". "Timaeus" is a philosophical essay on Pythagorean thought, and as such is something wonderful. There is a lot of nonsense in it from a modern scientific point of view, but on the other hand it's a marvellous conception of God and the World and mankind—and of course it's full of movement. It is a philosophy of movement actually . . . not far from Heraclitus and his ideas . . ." (ibid.)

We need only learn from Coton, when he refers to Laban and Jooss as having "Both worked in such sympathy and, such harmonious accord . . .", to realise that there can be few authorities alive as Kurt Jooss himself who could lend such convincing support to the fact that Pythagorean Cosmological thought forms the origin of Laban's inspiration.

Explicit references to the "Timaeus" in Laban's writings, are however, scarce when we compare them with the wealth of Pythagorean allusion. We can only account for this by the fact that Pythagoreanism is in essence a Secret Sect and its doctrines are veiled in mystery. (There is considerable evidence that Laban did in fact associate himself with a contemporary Pythagorean Society). But on rare occasions we do find specific references, confirmed most recently in the newly published book "Choreutics" (1966).

In "Die Welt des Tänzers" (1920), we read:

"Plato transmitted with his "Timaeus" the cosmogony of Pythagoras which is a form of dancing confession of faith." (WD 7)

And in "Gymnastik und Tanz" (1926), Laban declares:

"This "Timaeus" is a kind of gymnastic or choreographical revelation of faith." (GD 32)

"Choreutics" (1966) of which Part 1 was written about 1939, makes more detailed reference to "laws" to be found in the "Timaeus": "We can understand all bodily movement", says Laban,

" . . . as being a continuous creation of fragments of polyhedral forms. The body itself, in its anatomical or crystalline structure, is built according to the laws of dynamic crystallisation. Old magic rites have preserved a great deal of knowledge about these laws. Plato's description of the regular solids in the "Timaeus" is based on such ancient knowledge. He followed the traditions of Pythagoras . . ." (CS 105)

Confirmation of Laban's heavy debt to Greek Philosophy, from sources other than his own writings, can be found in historical and critical texts, as well as in less formal literature. Perhaps typical of these are the following:

"Laban had read a good deal of Ancient Greek Philosophy, and had been particularly influenced by Plato's Cosmogony,"

Fernau Hall — "Modern English Ballet"

"He is intoxicated with movement, the whole life of movement permeating the life of ancient times which today has perished and which seems to be re-incarnated with this one man . . .
 . . . he has dug up a huge part of life from ancient wisdom and surprisingly new inventions and discoveries unite in the form of an independent art of dance."

Hans Brandenburg — "Modern Dance"

But we have traced in our previous articles the general application of Pythagorean doctrine; we must now try to understand the more specific tenets of the "Timaeus".

Francis Macdonald Cornford in his scholarly work "Plato's Cosmology—The Timaeus of Plato", reminds us that Timaeus (who is a well-born rich philosopher and astronomer) recounts the myth of creation ending with the birth of mankind. From an ideal world of eternal Forms, he introduces us to the visible universe and the nature of man. "Looking deeper", suggests Cornford,

"we see that the chief purpose of the cosmological introduction is to link the morality externalised in the ideal society to the whole organisation of the world. The "Republic" had dealt on the structural analogy between the state and the individual soul. Now *Plato intends to base his conception of human life, both for the individual and for society, on the inexpugnable foundation of the order of the universe.* The parallel of macrocosm and microcosm runs through the whole discourse. True morality is not a product of human evolution, still less the arbitrary enactment of human wills. It is *an order and harmony of the soul; and the soul itself is a counterpart, in miniature, of the soul of the world, which has an everlasting order and harmony of its own, instituted by reason.* This order was revealed to every soul before its birth and it is revealed now in the visible architecture of the heavens." . . . p. 6(my italics)

Whilst earlier works have *implied* that human morality is based on cosmic order, Cornford points out that the "Timaeus" makes this *explicit* by way of demonstration.

Lee, in his very readable translation of the "Timaeus" suggests that its primary purpose is *theological*—"that is to say, to give a religious and teleological account of the origin of the world and of the phenomena of nature". He also reminds us that the "Timaeus" is a document of great importance in the history of European thought and that its influence "can be said to be continuous from its publication until the present day". (Nothing could corroborate this latter remark more than the discovery of the Pythagorean Myth-impermeated theories of Rudolf Laban). But we shall return to the nature of myth a little later. Let us now join R. P. Lodge in his playful account of the Pythagorean Cosmology as presented by the "Timaeus".

"Let us consider what the Pythagoreans tell us. They should know, if anyone does. Timaeus? Well, Timaeus does what nearly all Hellenes do, when you push them into a corner and insist upon an answer. He makes up stories, myths suitable for quieting childish minds, when children (otherwise well brought up) begin to ask awkward or difficult questions. In fact, he does for natural science pretty much what the great Protagoras does for social science. He refers the whole matter to an all-wise and all-powerful "God". If you are looking for something "ultimate", how will that do, as a hypothesis?"

Once upon a time, dear children (he seems to say), this world of ours was not like what it is now. It was just a mess. It was what the older poets call "chaos". There weren't any laws, or regular patterns. There weren't any "elements". There wasn't anything the mind could grasp at all. There was just a vast swirling sort of motion. You couldn't call it earthy, or watery, or fiery, or even airy. In fact, it hadn't any definite character at all. It was just there: not quite nothing, but definitely without anything you could call meaning or principle. Just between you and me, dear children, it is still there; and it always will be. You and I can't really, of ourselves, do very much about it.

But God can. And God did. Somewhere at the beginning of time, He decided that it would be more beautiful, if He superimposed upon chaos—law and order, and reduced its behaviour to some sort of organised unity, some sort of intelligible system. So God, dear children, superinduced upon the "chaos"—mathematical patterning: in fact, the very patterns which our clever Pythagorean brothers have been discovering for us. First, God made of all the uneasy motions—one great motion: circular motion. This enclosed all the chaotic material there was, and left nothing over, nothing outside of its dominance. What did we have then? Surely a sphere? Yes, dear children, a sphere. And in this sphere, into which the motion compressed its entire chaotic content, there were formed, very gradually,—well, the kinds of solid (regular, mathematical solid, that is), which you can form within a sphere.

These solids, as our Pythagorean brothers have taught us, might be tetrahedra, octahedra, dodekahedra, icosahedra, and cubes. These are like the crystals you can sometimes see for yourselves in ice-water, when it is nearly frozen. They are all based (as our Pythagoreans understand, oh, so well) upon a certain principle of triangularity: so that solids which have the same triangular base can be transmuted. Yes, they can be compressed into the form of other solids with the same base. Or, if the pressure becomes too great, the larger ones can be broken up into simpler forms, with the same base. In the end, they can lose their solidity altogether. Then, they become just surfaces, bare triangles; and these too can be broken up and dissolved. And what do we have then? Why, the original chaos again. Of course!"

All the Pythagorean scientists have to do then, according to Lodge, is to "trace God's patterns in the world around them. God creates in geometrical patterns, and "friends of God" (like our Pythagorean brothers) retrace in thought the geometry which God has kindly superimposed all over our (otherwise chaotic) world". But perhaps we should adopt a more serious attitude towards the precise underlying assumptions in the myth of "Timaeus". Let us follow Lodge's summary.

1. There are two orders of existence: (i) Being and (ii) Becoming. The world of Being is the only *real world*; it contains the Platonic Forms—the objects of rational thought and understanding. The world of Becoming is the lower realm; it is the world of sense perception without which no final knowledge is possible. Man's main purpose in life is to aspire to the real world of "pure forms" and by emulating them identify himself with the divine creator.
2. When creating the world of "Becoming", the divine craftsman used his ideal Forms *as models*. The macrocosm therefore becomes mirrored in the microcosmic perceivable world—in great detail and in as perfect congruence as "Necessity" will allow. (Necessity is an arbitrary factor present in the universe).
3. But before order can be established, a state of chaos exists and upon this God superimposes the patterning of his geometrical shapes. Fundamental among these shapes is the circle. God makes the world go round.
4. The entire chaos is enclosed within a sphere. Its surface, thought of as revolving, constricts its content, which in turn is forced to assume "quasi-spherical form", so much so that:
 - (a) physical reality as a whole becomes shaped like a sphere.
 - (b) The larger masses moving within it (the heavenly bodies), are shaped like spheres.
 - (c) On earth we find organism which are thought of as roughly spherical in form: i.e. as fundamentally brains (with certain outgrowths of cerebro-spinal material).
 - (d) Going still further down the scale we find the "elements" in the form of geometrical solids which can be inscribed within a sphere: tetrahedra, octahedra, icosahedra and cubes corresponding to "fire", "water", "air" and "earth".
 - (e) These are built up out of material which takes the form of much smaller shapes, i.e. elementary triangles (so beloved in the Pythagorean school). Triangles are the smallest rectilinear closed figures which can be inscribed within a circle. Dissolve these triangles and you are back where you started—unformed chaos.
5. Throughout the universe, motion is regularised and controlled by an "animating principle"—this applies to celestial bodies and indeed to human brains. Its function is to steady and regularise, to guide and control the otherwise chaotic motion tendencies of its content: so as to facilitate a self-controlled

- contribution of something of specific value to the universe as a whole.
6. In living organisms on our earth, their animating principle holds their content (particles of earth, water, fire, and air referred to as its "triangles") together in a specific equilibrium, whose mathematical formula varies from one species to another. The originally chaotic content is perpetually trying to escape from control and disintegrate. On the other hand, the animating central self-motion, superimposing the controlling forms, is perpetually seeking to achieve and maintain what the Greeks call "self-mastery".
7. There is a normal cycle of exercise and rest, of wear and tear of tissue followed by repair and growth. If the central self-motion is too weak to ensure these recoveries by itself, it can be re-inforced by *external motions* similar in type. Thus nurses rock babies in their arms; elderly dyspeptics secure similar benefits by taking a good walk, a carriage drive, or an ocean voyage. Medical men recognise in certain Hellenic dances a somewhat similar function. *Rhythmic exercises* affecting the organism as a whole *reinforce the efforts of the animating principle*, and make for self-mastery and health.
8. Educated men observe that these rhythmic processes throughout are always recurrent, cyclical in character. Accordingly they advise men of intelligence to study seriously the regular movements of the stars in their courses, and to *base their lives, as far as possible, upon similar regularities and periodicities*. By such studies men will learn to co-operate with God in the wisest possible way.

These then are the major tenets of the "Timaeus"—in essence: the Pythagorean Brotherhood recommends imitation of the behavioural patterns of the cosmos, and this, with appropriate transposition into human "movement" terms, is the major underlying assumption of Laban in his philosophy of movement.

But if it is to be felt that the complicated ramifications of the 'Timaeus' cannot be clearly seen in Laban's work at a glance, perhaps we should begin to compile a table of correspondence which will illuminate these. The student of Laban will no doubt wish to complete this table, so we shall draw our references, where possible, from "Choreutics" rather than from the older texts.

Timaeus: God finding the visible universe in a state of disharmony and disorderly motion, reduced it to order and harmony, deeming that this was in every way better.

Laban: Laban's whole philosophy revolves round the desire to promote an order and harmony in man's movement,

which he believes to be in a state of disorder, and as such, detrimental to individual and social well-being. (The writer recalls classes with Laban in the early 1950's when the word 'chaos' was a frequent term used by him in teaching.)

- Timaeus:* The universe is constructed according to a unique pattern—a copy of a unique, perfect and eternal model.
- Laban:* Movement in man, together with his anatomical and physiological make-up, is constructed in accordance with a mathematical model: "The movements of our body follow rules corresponding to those of mineral crystallisations". (CS 114) (see pt. 4.)
- Timaeus:* The 'body of the world' was created spherical and revolves round its own axis.
- Laban:* Man's own body conforms to 'spherical' anatomical and kinesiological principles (see pt. 3); its movement takes place in a kinesphere and harmonious scales are effected around an axis. (CS 70) "In practice, harmonious movement of living beings is of a fluid and curving nature which can be more clearly symbolised by a scaffolding closer to a spheric shape." (CS 101)
- Timaeus:* Elementary constituents in the universe (and their triangles) combine according to the geometrical formula—the Golden Section. This provides an indissoluble harmony.
- Laban:* Man's whole physical structure and functioning conforms to the proportions of the Golden Section. The "proportion between the length of the dimensional and diagonal transversals of the icosahedron and the length of its surface lines follows the law of the Golden Section" (CS 108). Obedience to this law engenders harmony of movement.
- Timaeus:* Of the seven physical motions, up and down, left and right, forward and backward and *uniform circular motion*, the creator allocated the last of these to the universe—it being the most divine characteristic.
- Laban:* Seven motions underlie the structure of Laban's 'space harmony' scales, which can be illustrated by means of geometrical models. *Circular movement* within the kinesphere has special significance, for the 'reigen' "is the bearer of all cultural education". "With this discovery the whole of nature may be recognised as being governed by the same choreutic laws of independent

circles." (CS 26) " 'Choreosophia' . . . is the nearest term I have discovered with which to express the essential ideas of this book. These ideas concern the wisdom to be found through the study of all the phenomena of circles existing in nature and in life." (Choreutics p. vii).

- Timaeus:* The heavenly bodies move in their own pathways at varying speeds and in varying directions—some fast, some slow, some spiral, some uniform in motion—all as a "moving image of eternity". The earthly bodies and their triangles (constituent parts of the geometrical forms: Air/octahedron, Fire/tetrahedron, Water/icosahedron, Earth/cube) each have their own prescribed direction tendencies and mastery of these in the human organism can bring about an affinity between the human soul and the 'soul of the universe'.
- Laban:* Within the kinesphere exist a number of pathways which are associated with different stresses (the dynamosphere)—'a crystalline network of pathways which carry strange impulses that want to be obeyed'. "In . . . Eukinetics the dynamic structure of these movements can be exactly determined" (CS 30). "Awareness of the standard scales in the dynamosphere leads to the very source of movement." (CS 114). "In every trace-form, created by the body, both infinity and eternity are hidden. Sometimes the veil seems to be lifted for an instant. Inspiration, clairvoyance, and a heightened awareness can thrive from this fissure in the part of the world which we see as eternity. Thus the body actions and trace-forms become a means of producing moments of ecstasy or clairvoyant concentration." (CS 54)
- Timaeus:* "It would be useless without a visible model to talk about the figures of the dance of these gods, their juxtapositions and relative counter-revolutions and advances of their orbits." (T 55) (Members of the Pythagorean Brotherhood constructed small scale models of the celestial bodies and their movements; these—referred to as 'orrieries' were indispensable for both scientific and artistic demonstration).
- Laban:* "But one thing I shall never forget, and that was the mysterious little box with crystal shapes, which he (Laban) guarded like a magician, and only opened when he wanted to give final emphasis to his words. He carried this around with him through thick and thin,

until he arrived and could make further use of it in England." (A Bavarian Schoolmaster GM D54 22). Crystal models, are to Laban, vital to his movement knowledge and research—they are in fact the basis of his whole analysis of movement and his reference to "the glorification of the great and general order of crystallisation" (GD 115), gives us some idea of their status in Laban's eyes. We need but take a sweeping glance at "Choreutics" (1966) to realise their importance.

- Timaeus*: In the Pythagorean cosmology there are three orders: Form; unchanging, uncreated and indestructible; unmodifiable, imperceptible and the object of thought
Copy; in constant motion, resembles the Form, recognisable by sensation
Receptacle; (Space) eternal and indestructible; provides a position for everything—apprehended in a 'kind of dream'. (T 52).
- Laban*: These three orders are clearly recognisable in Laban's theories:
Form; the regular geometrical bodies which can be inscribed within a sphere; the icosahedron has priority of place
Copy; the scales of movement with their 'mysterious network' of pathways, which follow the vertices of the 'Forms'. "Our Body," says Laban, "is the mirror through which we become aware of ever-circling motions in the universe with their polygonal rhythms." (CS 26)
Space; "Dreams are on the way to the space world, but they never reach it, while dances lead straight into the space world itself . . . Love and Dance are without time. They are entirely space, enwrapped into the endlessness of it all, uniting the spirit and becoming aware of itself." (Rudolph Laban GM N60 16).
- Timaeus*: The body should be looked after following the pattern of the universe, "for the motions in us that are akin to the divine are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe" (T 119).
- Laban*: "It cannot be said too often, and it is a unique conception to be stressed repeatedly and to be remembered: movement the path in our surroundings, a sign, a symbol

of the complex pathways of the universe—it is to this that we are today directed." (Rudolf Laban, "Children's Gymnastics and Dance" p. 48).

To continue this catalogue of correspondences would be tedious; there are in fact, few Pythagorean principles which are not reflected in Laban's prolific writings. But let us enquire into Plato's view of cosmic imitation before we turn our attention to Laban's transposition of this ancient myth.

Lodge, in his "Plato's Theory of Art" echoes Plato's cynicism and holds forth at length on the futility of Pythagorean mimicry:

"The Pythagorean Brotherhood recommends 'imitation' of the behavioural patterns of the cosmos. Plato inquires into the value of such imitation. Surely in the last resort, mere imitation remains as empirical as what it imitates. Its mimicry is playful, superficial, subjective, arbitrary. This may interest the Brothers. It may even help to keep them together as a group. As a mutual admiration society, they are not as other men. They observe certain group practices. They prostrate themselves before the rising sun. They garb themselves in ritual robes. They refrain from eating beans. They share a secret pass-word, and profess to pattern their movements upon the cosmos.

Such social ritual stimulates a kind of communal dream-life. The Brothers all dream the same dream and play the same game. But such copying of behavioural patterns, is merely fanciful. It does not achieve contact with any reality higher than the Brothers themselves with their group posturings. A choir of eight Neo-Pythagoreans can doubtless reproduce on a small scale, the alleged 'music of the spheres'. But does anyone contend that cuit-harmonies produced in this way achieve any sort of value recognisable outside the meetings of the Brotherhood? Is it claimed that, as ritual, it somehow affects, by sympathetic magic, the motions of the celestial bodies themselves? Surely, the net result of all such imitations, objectively speaking, is precisely zero: although such rituals may have some slight social-psychological value for Brothers to keep on playing their group game." P. 28-29.

We shall have to admit with Lodge, that such myths as the 'Timaeus' "satisfy children and young people, especially people whose technical education has not gone very far. But the adult mind is not so easily quieted." (PP46). It is of course going too far to attempt to interpret myth in any sense literally. What must be recognised is that mythic beliefs carry unformulated ideas, which in many cases do mature and emerge eventually as penetrating insights in their appropriate fields of knowledge. In respect of the 'Timaeus', it is now an historical curiosity, "but," says Lee, "it marks a decisive step in the development of scientific astronomy." (T 16).

MYTH, MATHEMATICS OR MOTIFS?

What now of Laban's transposition of the 'Timaeus'? Can we in the light of our study continue to credit it with any literal significance? Can we, for example, when we glance through

Laban's latest book "Choreutics", accept the elaborate complex of geometrical bodies together with the pseudo-anatomical, physiological, kinesiological and cosmic assumptions? Surely to do so would be to commit the same fundamental error as to attempt a literal translation of the 'Timaeus'? To attempt to de-mythologise Laban is to meet with precisely those problems of de-mythologising 'Timaeus'.

Professor Cassirer makes the reason very clear:

"Myth is nontheoretical in its meaning and essence. It defies and challenges our fundamental categories of thought. Its logic—if there is any logic—is incommensurate with all our conceptions of empirical or scientific truth." (EM p. 76)

Laban's transposition, of Plato's primitive chaos, unique patterns, spherical bodies, regular solids, Golden Means, seven motions, Form, Copy, Receptacle, triangles and universal rhythms, into a system of choreography — carrying as it does its full cosmic significance — must therefore be rejected on principle.

But still there is cause for disquiet. If the objective cosmological status of Laban's ideas is discredited, does there not remain some significant qualitative value that would account for the sensitive work we have witnessed in schools and colleges in this country?

Cassirer again helps us:

"In the new light of science mythical perception has to fade away. But that does not mean that the data of our physiognomic experience as such are destroyed or annihilated. They have lost all objective or cosmological value, but their *anthropological value persists*. In our human world we cannot deny them and we cannot miss them, *they maintain their place and their significance* . . . While science has to abstract from these qualities in order to fulfil its task, it cannot completely suppress them. They are not extirpated root and branch; they are only *restricted to their own field* . . . (ibid p. 76) (my italics).

And that field, is the field of artistic activity where geometrical and rhythmic *motifs* are relevant. But, of course, to hypostatise crystals and uniform circular motion, as Laban has done — to speak of them as ultimate realities, the very essence and substance of things — is to be a victim of the mythical mode of thinking to which we have already referred. (Pt. 4).

ACADEMIC IMAGE

Whatever Laban's fundamental philosophy — whether it be a conviction that human movement should 'co-ordinate with the cosmos', or that the 'self-activating soul' should be re-inforced with circular exercises — the fact remains that he has initiated both a new attitude to Movement Education in this country and a new method of teaching, from which we have reaped rich rewards. But for educational practitioners to have seized upon and found a suc-

cessful method of stimulating creative activity, was bound to lead — at least in the reaches of higher education — to an inquiry into underlying principles. These we now know to be steeped in ancient cosmological doctrine, a fact which illuminates a great deal of hitherto strangely worded theory entrenched in current practice. But what of Laban's long accredited status as an 'intellectual', a 'scholar', and a 'researcher'? We should surely need to examine the credentials of such firmly held opinion?

Undoubtedly a great number of factors have contributed to Laban's luminous image. Firstly the whole vast array of geometrical bodies, scaffolding and drawings which have surrounded him. Little could be so impressive as the finely and delicately constructed interlacing, interpenetrating and intersecting icosahedra, octahedra, tetrahedra and dodecahedra in steel, wood and wire which purport to give theoretical status to the practice itself. The air of reverent respect created by this man's seeming scientific approach has grown as we have been led more deeply into the mysteries of 'spatial harmonies'.

(It will be remembered that Laban was a skilled artist, and his early training had given him a good technique with pencil and paint. He could capture the evanescent moment of a gesture or expression, and few human skills reap so readily the admiration of the on-looker.)

Then again, Laban brought with him from the continent, a great reputation of high intellectual capacity—he was heralded as a philosopher, learned in a great many arts and sciences. Historians, we have seen, did not spare themselves in their declaration concerning Laban's theoretical achievements. He was also teacher to some of the most eminent of European dancers of the 1920's and 1930's — Mary Wigman and Kurt Jooss. Their high level of artistic merit must surely lend support to any underlying theory; and was Laban himself not Director of Movement at the Berlin State Opera? Anyone in doubt or inclined to query the academic or artistic viability of Laban's theory and practice, therefore, had only to look around to find ample corroboration of this man's genius. What good reason could there be for any serious challenge?

Now research into theoretical foundations has not been a strong characteristic of movement education; teaching has largely rested on a sensitive and intuitive approach, and much success has attended this. But the gradual raising of the subject's status to degree level, has called for a more rigorous theoretical attitude to practice. It might well have seemed reassuring then, in view of this tendency, to learn that beneath the practice in the Art of Movement lay a solid foundation of 'academic' knowledge. Laban's own associates from Germany have given vocal support to the feeling

that there were vast resources of 'wisdom' in Laban's archives, only waiting to be tapped; and in this country Joan Goodridge wrote in 1956: "A Research Department is essential. Mr. Laban's guidance is needed to lead people in a further investigation of the science that underlies so many important discoveries. We are only on the fringe of a whole realm of knowledge . . ." (GM 056 8). What we have found so surprising is that in twenty-five years of Laban's Art of Movement, no research whatever has 'got beyond the fringe'.

One further factor must lend support to Laban's fame as a theorist — his notation. As we can see from our enquiry (EMN), this has become a world-wide system and has all the marks of a carefully wrought and thoroughly comprehensive mode of recording human movement. Yet the painstaking precision needed to bring such a system to the point of application seems strangely in contrast to our findings concerning Laban's technical ability (CSRL App. 2). From his intimate colleagues we learn that Laban had no mind for detail; his was a sweeping synoptic view rather than a painstaking analytical one. Only by searching enquiry do we learn that following its initial conception (*undoubtedly* inspired by Pythagorean 'triangles', 'cubes' and 'elements'), the systematic elaboration of the notation was the work of self-effacing associates — among them Albrecht Knust, and later the Dance Notation Bureau in New York under its Director Ann Hutchinson and also in this country Valerie Preston-Dunlop.

A great many factors have, therefore, contributed to the 'academic' prestige of Laban. His reputation as a theorist, and his 'theory', have become a myth, and often the uncritical enthusiasm of supporters has served to perpetrate that myth. But myth does — as Professor Langer insists — emerge from its swaddling bands, and the theory of Laban has now reached the point when it must take logical form and become open and accessible to adequate appraisal and evaluation.

EARLY INFLUENCES

In our desire to 'trace to their source' the ideas which inspired Laban, we have necessarily had recourse to background influences. Laban's early life has shown us the combined influences of an aristocratic military family, a traditional — if severely chequered and foreshortened — formal education, and the mystic teachings of a Mohammedan priest. We have learnt also of Laban's natural tendency to excessive fantasy — confirmed in his own biography "Ein Leben für den Tanz" — and of his extreme naivety and predilection for creative activity. We believe that in combination these factors disposed Laban to find some inspiration in the poetic,

oratorical, rhapsodical and speculative writings emanating from the nineteenth century school of German Idealism. Goethe, Schiller, Fichte, Schelling, Oken and Steffin are but a few names associated with high idealism and philosophies of nature, and striking among their speculations is the persistent theme of *Platonic Ideal Forms*, of "continually recurring imitations of eternal ideas" (ET 2 246). From such an ethos came an obsession for crystals, which echoed archetypal models — whose shapes were confirmed in abundance in nature.

We have indicated some affinities between the writings of Friedrich Froebel and Rudolf Laban, but we must register an extraordinary parallel between the two men's lives, interests and dispositions.

Although Froebel enjoyed a short university career, he too was the victim of a vague idealistic philosophy. He was of a dreamy, contemplative temperament seduced by pantheistic doctrine and was powerfully influenced by the philosophies of the German Idealists. Following also the great tradition of Platonic Forms he developed theories of education in which pseudo-mathematical symbolism emerged, based upon the archetypal crystals and cosmic circularity. It might also be remembered that Froebel had an English following of dedicated disciples who, with almost religious zeal defended his fundamental principles. But much of Froebel's speculative theories have been rejected and an appraisal of his work has led to the absorption of those aspects in keeping with current enlightened theory and practice.

The positive influences of Sufism, Oriental philosophy (with its strong Hellenistic undercurrent) and Secret Societies, all confirm Laban's adherence to his own dictum that "The dancer should also look around the fields of mysticism and theology for confirmations and connections of his experience" (WD 262). That Laban found such 'confirmations' and 'connections' is evident from his sustained interest in and frequent reference to, the 'Ancient Mysteries'.

EARLY GERMAN WORKS

Our criticism of Laban's early writings "Die Welt des Tänzers" (1920), "Des Kindes Gymnastik und Tanz" (1926), "Gymnastik und Tanz für Erwachsene" (1926) and "Choreographie" (1926) must needs be severe. Qualified translators have had the utmost difficulty in making reasonable interpretations. Laban's mystical notions, extravagant-florid and undisciplined style have made a study of these a complex task. One translator writes:

"As a whole it has proved extremely difficult partly due to the mysticism of the author . . . and partly due to an unorthodox use of the German language. (CSRL 31)

And yet another writes:

"I would not say that Laban's writings are the work of a scholar; his style is complicated and mystical. From a grammatical point of view, his sentences, although correct, are so involved and technical that the average reader would fail to grasp their meaning. Laban's books provide a challenge to any translator." (ibid)

Further views of Laban's style have been recorded by his own associates (CSRL App. 2), and these serve to confirm the charge of obscurity. It might also be mentioned that even the English texts (for which there might be more allowance) are not free from this difficulty—as one recent reviewer of "Choreutics" (1966) points out:

"Laban is never easy to read . . . While it (the text) must be of interest to all students of movement and dance, for whom it is intended, I admit to serious doubts as to whether it will be comprehensible to them." V. Preston-Dunlop (GM N 66)

Laban did not have the advantage of a rigorous scientific or philosophical training; his writings, in fact, reflect all the excesses of an undisciplined mind struggling to theorise. His rebellious childhood and youth, and his overwhelming tendency to indulge in fantastic speculation, quite unfitted him for the task of 'theorist'. In spite of his devotion and dedication to dance 'theory', and his fastidious application to geometrical and mathematical detail, his work lacks precision and as we have seen, often intelligibility. Extravagant, florid, dogmatic and cryptic expression marks Laban's style throughout all his German writings.

Professor Langer, we have noted, has warned us that the writings of the most thoughtful dancers are hard to read, and in citing Laban as a 'perfect instance' of one addicted to mythical thinking, but confirms our growing conviction of his false position as an acclaimed intellectual and theorist.

Without philosophical training, the confusion and 'mystical metaphysics' of Laban's works must to the student seem insuperable; but one major clue has enabled us to give the whole of Laban's writings an orientation. This, as we have recorded, is their affinity with Pythagorean doctrine and thought. Here as nowhere else, lies the explanation for otherwise incomprehensible 'theory'.

RE-ORIENTATION

"If the Art of Movement is to scale the ladder of scholastic respectability, and convince the world of its importance in the conventional academic examination-ridden atmosphere of the contemporary curriculum, it must do it the hard way not by preaching unspecified spiritual values but by demonstrating its contribution to culture." Professor G. P. Meredith (CCYB 21)

How can we now, without discarding the whole of Laban's theorising, re-orientate his 'philosophical foundations' in order to meet more stringent aesthetic and educational criteria? Perhaps we

should first of all realise that the 'mythical consciousness' is structurally the same as the artistic consciousness, and that provided we transpose Laban's specious account of the physical world into artistic motifs, we shall recognise them as valuable stimuli for the dance — but *only* in the role of *motifs*. "The complete identification of fact, symbol and import, which underlies all literal belief in myth" (FF 186), must find re-orientation in a sound aesthetic theory. Laban's mythical mode of apprehension (undoubtedly shared by some of his followers) has failed to make the necessary distinction between the *aesthetic* and the *mythical* and such a condition we believe has led to a retardation in the development of dance as an art form. The illegitimate hypostatisation of certain theoretical elements deriving from the 'Timaeus' myth and the belief by some practitioners that some absolute 'power' resides in the appropriate choreographic sequences which 'harmonise' the soul, is to remain victim of the mythical thinking which has, in the past beset artists and educators alike. In mythical imagination there is always an implied act of belief, whereas (to use Kant's words) the aesthetic contemplation "is entirely indifferent to the existence or non-existence of its object". The true aesthetic consciousness leaves the problem of belief behind; its images are recognised as *illusion*, and in making use of them as such, it gains a *new freedom of consciousness*.

Dance educators, enjoying this new freedom, will address themselves to the true 'symbolic space' of the artist which has a structure of its own; or to use Professor Meredith's phrase "its own cultural geometry". That 'geometry' when displayed, unlike the Pythagorean Cosmology, will reveal the relations between *actual feeling* and *imagined feeling*, between self-expression and the formulation and presentation of aesthetic feelings in the *art form* of the dance. 'Philosophic foundations' in such an event will have artistic rather than cosmic significance.

ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

FW	S. Fletcher	'Froebels Chief Writings on Education'
	J. Welton	
CSRL	G. F. Curl	'A Critical Study of Rudolf von Laban's Theory and Practice of Movement' (M.Ed. Thesis Leicester 1966)
WD	Rudolf Laban	'Die Welt des Tänzers'
GD	Rudolf Laban	'Gymnastik und Tanz'
CS	Rudolf Laban	'Choreutics'
T	H. D. P. Lee	'Plato Timaeus'
GM		Laban Art of Movement Guild Magazine
PP	R. P. Lodge	'The Philosophy of Plato'

PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATIONS (PART VI)

EM	E. Cassirer	'An Essay on Man'
EMN	G. F. Curl	'An Enquiry into Movement Notation'
ET	J. T. Merz	'A History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century'
CCYB		Chelsea College of Physical Education Year Book Vol. 1
FF	S. K. Langer	'Feeling and Form'

OTHER REFERENCES

Rudolf Laban	'Des Kindes Gymnastik und Tanz'
Rudolf Laban	'Choreographie'
Rudolf Laban	'Ein Leben für den Tanz'
A. V. Coton	'The New Ballet'
Fernau Hall	'Modern English Ballet'
Hans Brandenburg	'Modern Dance'
F. M. Cornford	'Plato's Cosmology—The Timaeus of Plato'
R. P. Lodge	'Plato's Theory of Art'
G. F. Curl	'Philosophic Foundations' (Parts I - V) Laban Art of Movement Guild Magazine

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Whilst the author accepts full responsibility for the presentation of findings in this series of articles, grateful thanks are due to all those who have contributed by means of correspondence, interviews and guidance. It would be impossible to mention them all, but the following have been of special help:

Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss, Albrecht Knust, Lisa Ullmann, Sylvia Bodmer, Gertrud Friedburg, Ruth Hassell, Lotte Auerbach, Hilda Brumof, Valerie Preston-Dunlop, Fernau Hall, A. V. Coton, Professor G. P. Meredith, Professor J. W. Tibble, Professor L. A. Reid.

BOOK REVIEWS

"CREATIVE DANCE FOR BOYS"

Jean Carroll and Peter Lofthouse.

Love, Success and Security should be the keynote of all our schools. In this book how clearly we are shown how to gain security, and confidence, hence success, by children in the sphere of Dance. This book has a message for all teachers, not only male physical educationists. The philosophy which pervades throughout every chapter could so easily be applied to all subjects. The need first to be familiar—to explore—the tools we are using, then to develop this into some worthwhile, stimulating and successful purpose.

The author dispels the mystique which for several years has shrouded movement. The idea prevalent in so many of our schools that movement is merely prancing round to any record, or waving like a tree in the breeze, or a tulip shooting from a bulb, is within these pages destroyed. We have here ideas and suggestions, really tried on boys of 13 and 14 years of age that the traditional P.E. master can really understand and use. We see here the real meaning of physical education, the use of the mind as well as the body. The need for the expressive content of the movement being aroused, as well as the will and determination to persist with the performance.

The book starts with the types of dynamic movements all boys really enjoy. It shows clearly how these simple movements can be easily developed into dance, and in so doing enrich the movement and improve the performance. The author writes with an obvious knowledge and ability not only as a teacher of dance but also a teacher of physical education.

From the dynamic movements which ask the question, "How does the movement go?" We are led to the form and structure which asks, "Where does the movement go?" Here we are helped to understand the exploration of space by the body, and perhaps more important to really come to terms with an understanding not only of the space around us, but also the space common to all. Any teacher of games, or any observer of a good games player knows the importance of this.

We are gradually led into perhaps the greatest contribution Movement, and perhaps only Movement can make, to the whole question of relationships. For years our Education has been concerned, quite rightly with the individual, but often to the detriment of the group. Here we can read, and are given concrete examples of the great contribution Movement can make to help the relationship between one person and another. Surely our education system, as well as helping children to develop as whole persons should also help them to be able to be considerate one for another. We read the most important message of this book in the chapter on Relation-

ships. "We can only exist fully in relationship with others". "Listen, watch and feel with the group". "It is as important to be able to work with others, as to work alone".

The suggestions are particularly relevant for the male physical education teacher dealing with boys only. But this book should be read by all teachers of movement, the ideas are also relevant to mixed classes at primary and lower secondary level. The book develops in a simple and direct way, and at the end we have real understanding of dance. Dance not dominated by classical ballet, but truly creative. Each stage of development is very clearly illustrated by photographs of a really high standard.

If this book is read and the ideas honestly tried, we should see a rapid and stimulating development in virile creative dance. Perhaps more important this should lead to a genuine interest in physical activity of all types, and so a new sphere for the expression of the maladies of our society.

GEOFFREY SADDLER.

"MODERN DANCE. THE JOOSS—LEEDER METHOD"

Jane Winearls. A. & C. Black 25s.

In her introduction Jane Winearls speaks of the "unbridged gap between Educational and Theatrical Dance in England". Considering this statement one realises that it is only too sadly true, and that it is one of the more pressing problems due for solving by our generation of dance students and teachers, both educational and theatrical.

The first edition of Jane Winearls's book was published in 1958 and set out to classify the method of Kurt Jooss and Sigurd Leeder who have perhaps come closest in this country to bridging that gap. Taking their movement fundamentals from first hand experience with Rudolf Laban, and sharing his ideals and inspirations, they trained their pupils as professional dancers.

In one sense the book is a training manual. Here are basic movement concepts categorised for easy understanding and practice by dancers. Drawings and diagrams are numerous and clear. The influence of Laban is fundamental, but combined with sheer skill-training as one would find in classical ballet. The movement concepts predominate, but the audience is never very far away.

Since the publication of the first edition, Jane Winearls has added experience of working with actors to her many years of working with dancers. The new chapters added to the second edition immediately broaden the book considerably. She is deeply concerned with movement development in education and in the theatre and endeavours to evaluate its relationship within the two spheres. One chapter is written by Gerald Wragg with whom she has frequently collaborated in dramatic presentations.

Walter Sorrell says of Jooss, "His work was that of a dramatist who felt closer to movement than to words" and this, combined with being a "superb teacher" (Agnes de Mille) rates his work with Sigurd Leeder a worthwhile study under the expert guidance of Miss Winearls.

FANNY BALDWIN.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

DANCE IN AFRICA

Dear Madam,

In reading the last magazine of the Laban Art of Movement Guild I found in the Vice-President's address to the annual conference 1969, that the question arose whether there is any influence of Laban's work in Africa. Perhaps the enclosed quotation of part of an article about dance in Ghana would be interesting to readers of the magazine. The article appeared in Dance Magazine, May 1969.

"The African Dance Company of Ghana is especially successful in preservation and presentation of ethnic dance. by Rose Ann Thom.

So convincing are the Ghanaian dancers that audiences might be tempted to believe that they have been taken directly from some wilderness village. In reality the company is attached to the University of Ghana, and its members must be taught the repertoire, as dancers must in any professional group. Opoku, the director, is very demanding of his dancers: they must look absolutely authentic.

The company had its genesis six years ago, when the Ghanaian government asked Opoku to form a dance troupe. He realised that in order to ensure its success, he must start a school and so one was established in association with the University of Ghana. The school advertises to attract students who, if accepted, are well taken care of in terms of bursaries and transportation funds.

In order to receive a certificate from affiliated dance school, students must pass courses in Labanotation, sociology, theory of music, traditional singing and drumming and English.

They still study Labanotation and much of their time is involved with learning dances and in research for a thesis."

Yours faithfully,

CORRIE HARTONG.

Centraal Dansberaad, The Hague.

OBITUARY

MISS ELSIE PALMER

Elsie Palmer died on the 21st September last at her home in Lancashire after a long and severe illness. Those who knew of her suffering, which she bore with such tremendous bravery, must have felt thankful that relief had come to her at last.

It is the most difficult thing to put into words something of our thoughts and feelings when a friend has departed. Feelings of sorrow and gratitude mingle and however much we may succeed in embodying them in our words they are not enough to bring vividly before our eyes the bond that connected us. We have to impart life to the gap with which we are left by calling up in our memory the impulses which the person, whilst still with us, has set forth.

Elsie had an exceptional capacity to inspire in others a sense of devotion, a quality which she herself had to a high degree. It was she who opened up, as far back as 1942 many channels through which our work in movement and dance could flow into the field of Education. Through her continual challenging and penetrating questions which came from true educational thought and conviction, she helped to shape a method which has found acceptance.

During the war years she motivated a group of teachers to study with me in evening classes over a period of three years. From this group, and with her help, originated our Guild. Elsie served for many years on its Council where she was held in much esteem by her colleagues as a capable organiser and adviser who would work for the very highest standards of integrity and behaviour. Her interest in people, her outstanding power of observation and judgement together with her sincere appreciation of other people's achievements made her an invaluable member of the Membership Committee for which she was able to work until very recently.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to have worked with Elsie in close association will always remember the unselfish and indefatigable spirit with which she responded to any demand, as well as her enthusiastic and joyful personality. She has been an inspiration to so many of us generously giving of her energies to the advancement of our cause.

Whilst we, her friends and colleagues, are poorer for her loss we can cherish the seeds she has planted and protect the fruits which have already grown from them.

LISA ULLMANN.

OBITUARY

MISS HILDA BRUMOF

It is with a heavy heart that I write these lines. One of our oldest Guild members, our colleague and friend Hilda Brumof, has gone from us. With her we have lost a most sincere and faithful supporter of the Guild and a true friend. Many of you will remember her welcoming smile and her sympathetic understanding. Some of us will have seen her beautiful solo-dances and know that some were based on her deep religious feelings.

Hilda, like myself, came over to this country as a refugee from Nazi-Germany. As a professional dancer, she had been influenced by Laban when he was in Berlin. In England she worked for many years as a lecturer at Avery Hill College of Education, London. When the Laban Guild was formed at Bishop Otter College, Chichester, she became one of the first members.

After her retirement from Avery Hill she was asked to work part-time at Homerton College, Cambridge where she was much appreciated by her students and colleagues. Later on she returned to Berlin in order to be near her sister and to help an old and sick friend. In her letters she told me about some part time work with nurses which she was enjoying very much. I think it quite likely that she overworked in the fulfillment of her various duties, not sparing herself, but always thinking of the needs of others.

Hilda Brumof was a fine, experienced teacher, always gentle and patient. She will be equally missed by her friends, colleagues and students. Let us share in her sincere belief in a life after death.

LOTTIE AUERBACH.

GUILD MEMBERSHIP LIST OF NEW MEMBERS

Bowden, Miss J. M., Stockport	Kochanek, Miss Julia, Shortlands
Brookes, Mrs. M. C., Thorpe Bay	Kochanek, Mrs. J. L., Shortlands
Champion, Miss A. M., Boston, Lincs.	Kvasnicka, Mr. J., Ohio, U.S.A.
Chandler, Miss G. M., Lancing	Lance, Miss D., London
Chittenden, Miss H. J., Andover	Linge, Miss D., London
Colbert, Miss W. K., Bradford	Long, Miss M. J., Thorpe Bay
Colman, Miss M. H., Glasgow	McKenzie, Miss S., London
Cotterill, Mrs. E. M., Liverpool	Macfarlane, Miss M., Truro
Cox, Miss J. A., Chesterfield	Marrington, Miss A. L., Chelmsford
Cree, Miss V. L., London	Maybury, Miss A., Rochdale
Cross, Miss H., Lancaster	Miller, Miss A., Berkhamsted
Curtis, Miss J. M., South Elmsall	Morris, Miss J., Liverpool
Dahlstrom, Miss K., Sweden	Nilsson, Miss A-K., Sweden
Davies, Mrs. Edell, Shaldon, Devon	Notini, Miss L., Sweden
Davies, Miss Lynne, Sutton Coldfield	Oldroyd, Miss M., Batley Yorks.
Davies, Mrs. M., Hockley, Essex	Pearson, Mr. N., South Africa
De Castro, Miss J. D., Newbury	Pedler, Miss J. A., Bishopsteignton
Diebel, Miss H., Horsham	Pendle, Miss L. S., Norfolk
Donald, Mrs. M., Southampton	Powley, Mr. D. L., Flaxton, Yorks.
Doyle, Miss, S. M., Bradford	Preston, Miss H., Bromley
Duerden, Miss V., Lancaster	Reigate, Mrs. W., St. Albans
Durrans, Miss N., Australia	Roscoe, Miss J., Wigan
Edwards, Mrs. J., Carlisle	Ross, Mrs. V. M., Bristol
Floyd, Mrs. A. J., Paris	Rutland, Miss G. M., London
Fox, Miss K. E., Norwich	Salmon, Miss F., Manchester
Gerrard, Miss J., Northwich	Shore, Mr. R., Worcester
Goransson, Miss C., Sweden	Smith, Miss Judy E. A., Stoke-on-
Grainger, Miss G., Birmingham	Trent
Green, Miss C. M., Darlington	Smith, Miss Maurcen A., Braintree
Hastilow, Miss P. B., Warley, Worcs.	Somerville, Miss J. E., Oxford
Hermolle, Miss M., Birmingham	Stevens, Miss S-A., Fareham
Heron, Mrs. J. P., Bromley	Stockenberg, Mrs. M., Sweden
Highton, Miss J. F., W. Horsley	Swift, Mrs. J., Little Chalfont, Bucks.
Houghton, Miss P. A., Worcester	Tottle, Miss M., Southend-on-Sea
How, Miss J. M., Clacton-on-Sea	Walker, Miss H. J., Birmingham
Humphrey, Miss J., London	Wall, Mrs. R., Plymouth
Hunter, Miss O. E., Bingley	Watson, Mr. P., W. Bridgford, Notts.
Jackson, Miss S., Heswall, Cheshire	Williams, Marie A., Welling
Jacobs, Miss M., Penzance	Wimbles, Miss P., Westgate-on-Sea
Jayes, Mrs. D., Halesowen, Worcs.	Wynne, Miss M., Toronto, Canada
Jenner, Mr. J. C., Chorleywood	Young, Mrs. A., Oxford
Jobbins, Miss V., London	Yu Ha, Miss Kim, Seoul, Korea
Johnston, Mrs. S., Tadworth	Zimmermann, Mrs. M., Sweden
Kershaw, Mrs. W., Matlock	

AFFILIATED GROUPS

Michaelis Dance Group, London	Saffron Walden College, Saffron Walden
Moat Mount School, London	Swanley School, Swanley

1970 CONFERENCE

14th and 15th FEBRUARY

STUART

DIGBY



COLLEGE

ROEHAMPTON
S.W.

QUESTIONNAIRE

If you have not already returned your questionnaire please correct the address to:

57 Newton Garth, Leeds,7.

If your form has been lost, Mrs. Rickinson will supply you with a new one if you write and ask.

If you are in doubt about which of the Officers of the Guild you wish to contact, ask—

**Mrs. Rickinson,
24, West Park Avenue,
Kew Gardens,
Surrey**