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*Movement & Dance*

*Movement in Nature and the Arts*

*„We must look reverently into the workshop of Nature  
where the spirit of dancing is created...“*

*Rudolf Laban*





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# Pure Gold! Pure Magic!

**- from dazzling academic ceremonial to dark and deadly tribal ritual!**

Geraldine Stephenson (a newly created *Honorary Doctor of Arts of De Montfort University*) - bedecked in a full-length gold gown, satin-trimmed hood and a black broad-brimmed velvet bonnet - resumed her seat at the conclusion of her 'address' to the tumultuous applause of a capacity crowd in the resplendent Great Hall of Bedford Corn Exchange on the morning of 23 October 2003. The atmosphere was euphoric as the Pro-Vice Chancellor rose to his feet in his vivid scarlet and gold regalia and issued the following epoch-making declaration: "**Graduation Ceremonies will never be the same again!**"

Nor will they! - Geraldine, at a stroke, had shattered the strict conventions of academic protocol by transforming this sedate ceremonial gathering of mortar-boarded and hooded graduands - together with honoured guests - into a howling, stamping, lunging, tomahawk-brandishing horde of tribal warriors! And she did it, oh! so sublimely - with all the skill we have come to associate with her long distinguished career in choreography. It all happened thus:

Geraldine Stephenson in her stately attire was invited to rise and stand before the august assembly; she did so with supreme calm, dignity and assurance - her black velvet bonneted head held high. Behind her was a blaze of vivid scarlet and gold - a phalanx of richly-robed University dignitaries: Pro-Vice Chancellor, Governors, Fellows, Professors and the Presenters of the various Faculties. Immediately to her side were the University's symbols of high office - the gold and silver Maces - the Royal Charter. It was a dazzling sight of academic splendour, prestige and power.



Photo by B J Lewis

The University Orator doffed his cap to the Pro-Vice Chancellor and proceeded to chart Geraldine's 'star-studded' career - for not only had she 'masterminded spectacular pageants and masques ... but for half a century had been the expert in advising the worlds of TV, theatre, film and opera' (see *Citation* overleaf). Geraldine stood motionless, expressionless - as if immune to the accolades cascading upon her!

With another doff of his cap, the Orator concluded his  
(continued overleaf)

# editorial



## A Happy New Year to all our readers!

The past year has been marked by some colourful, poignant and stimulating occasions - occasions which our pages have endeavoured to capture; they include a memorable AGM at Cheltenham, numerous invigorating Workshops organised by the *Laban in Places* team, impressive Community Dance Courses, the ceremonial opening of the new award-winning building at Creekside, a very special encounter with *Suffolk Youth Theatre's Romeo and Juliet* at Ipswich under the masterly direction of Michael Platt, Dr Marion North's retirement party, a riot of activity and blaze of colour at *LabanConnect's* bonanza at the *Royal Festival Hall*, and not least the conferment of *Honorary Doctor of Arts* on our President Geraldine Stephenson at *De Montfort University*. We are most grateful to all of those who recorded these events for our pages.

However, we still desperately need more contributions if we are to reflect the widest possible interests of the Guild to our members. Please don't be diffident in submitting items ranging from: the light-hearted, speculative, anecdotal, poetic to the factual, informative, pedagogical, community and child-centred, dance theatre, dramatic, therapeutic, scientific, analytical, critical and philosophical - all are welcome!

This edition has taken an interest in *Movement in Nature* - a theme which fascinated Rudolf Laban and we are again indebted to Pam Anderton for providing us with the design for our cover.

We are also delighted that Stephen Parry has felt able to return to some editorial duties; we welcome his expertise and experience. He wishes to thank most sincerely all of those who have sent him good wishes during his sabbatical year.

As we approach the Guild's special *Day of Dance and AGM 2004*, to be held at the new *Laban Creekside* on Saturday March 27th, we believe that it has the potential for an epoch-making event to which all members and friends will wish to be associated. The new Director, Anthony Bowne, has written to the editor assuring the Guild of a warm welcome. In order that the editorial team can do justice to your experiences and photographic images we are extending our copy-date from 1st April to 1st May 2004 - in the hope that you will have time to contribute. Please come and exercise your latent skills as reporters, commentators and photographers! You may well be hailed as the *Stirling Prize Winner of the Year* for Journalism or Photography!



## Pure Gold! Pure Magic! continued

ten minute eulogy to a roar of applause; there followed the ritual draping of a satin-trimmed gold hood over Geraldine's shoulders. The Pro-Vice Chancellor doffed his cap, shook her hand, congratulated her and conferred upon her the title of *Honorary Doctor of Arts of De Montfort University*; he then handed her a parchment scroll of conferment, and, with yet another doff of his cap, turned to the audience and announced: 'The Guest speaker, Ms Geraldine Stephenson, will now address the assembly'. The atmosphere was hushed - expectant! What could Dr Stephenson possibly say to this congregation that would do justice to such a high profile event?

Geraldine moved slowly and gracefully to the amplified lectern and proceeded to speak warmly of those who had inspired her as a student at Bedford, at Manchester - not least Joan Goodridge, Rudolf Laban, Lisa Ullmann and many others. She spoke nostalgically of memorable days: of choreographing large-scale events in the *Royal Albert Hall*, *The Royal Festival Hall*, at the *York Mystery Plays* on Television, in Film and in Opera - these were jewelled moments in her life.

This biographical sketch, however, was shortlived, for Geraldine abruptly tossed aside her lovely velvet bonnet, leaped to the forefront of the stage, when, to the astonishment of everyone - not least the scarlet-robed dignitaries - she was transfigured: magically her hooded academic gold gown metamorphosed into the mantle of a Shaman (a doctor of *black arts*); she bent forward

But the resounding footwork was only the beginning - there was much more to come! Our witch-doctor lurched forward, followed dutifully by her disciples - including the elders (albeit with many a hat-retrieving gesture) - and as her warriors flung themselves towards her, their flying, vividly-coloured, hoods cast an ominous sea of gold and blue over the auditorium; it was a warning sign of deadly deeds to come! And come they did! Our high-priestess slowly raised her right arm - clutching her tomahawk - and her horde of submissive subjects brandished their tomahawks too - *en masse!* And then - oh so swiftly - she wielded her weapon and swung it mercilessly downwards, uttering a heart-rending cry! Her warriors ecstatically complied (not least the scarlet-robed elders ranged behind her); the whole assembly erupted with blood-curdling cries! ... Then a moment of silence ... the ritual was complete!

Geraldine stood tall again, but not before she had quietly and deftly executed some exquisite mime and reminded us of the extensive research required to choreograph such an authentic tribal ritual; and then, donning her beautiful velvet bonnet and tidying her satin trimmed hood, she calmly resumed her seat. We had, she said, 'participated splendidly in the hunting ritual of a *North American Indian tribe!* We had been magnificent *Mohicans!*'. Small wonder the Pro-Vice Chancellor, doffing his cap yet again, announced (in restrained admiration) that: 'Graduation Ceremonies would never be the same again!'

Hundreds of graduands then processed to the stage, passing before Geraldine on their way - each doffing their caps respectfully to the Pro-Vice Chancellor, who granted them their coveted awards. Finally, the mace-bearing officials stepped forward - shouldering their precious symbols - before leading the scarlet and gold retinue through the crowd to the triumphant sounds of the great organ, with Geraldine stepping (oh so gracefully!) down the aisle - as if to the manner born! Few could have imagined that minutes before she had magically transformed this dignified and majestic assembly into an ecstatic tribal 'movement choir' of war-mongering *North West American Mohicans!* A magnificent and memorable *tour de force* - and that by our own Guild President -Geraldine Stephenson!

After-dinner reminiscences:

Anecdotes were bound to flow from this tumultuous occasion, for Geraldine told us just how she became familiar with Mohican tribal practices. She went to the *Horniman Museum* to research her subject for a BBC TV Presentation. The Curator put Geraldine in touch with a man who had spent his life studying the Tribal Rites of the 'Red Indians'. 'I shall never forget' she says, 'my visit to his house in London. He gave me a Nescafé mug in my right hand (that was the Tomahawk) and we spent a delightful evening stomping around his kitchen with wild triumphant shouts as our feet stepped left, right; right, left; left right etc etc.' Geraldine was at pains to learn this dance for her production 'The Last of the Mohicans', but 'normally this would have been done by hundreds of tribal warriors all through the night'. Alas, the BBC gave her only 8 male dancers to perform the dance in just one minute! We concluded that Geraldine had more than made up for her meagre cast at the BBC when she galvanised up to a thousand spell-bound warriors in the *Bedford Corn Exchange* on the morning of 23 October 2003!

*Gordon Curl*



Photo by Judith Chapman

- her eyes piercing the distance as if in a trance; her arms stretched over the assembled *graduating tribes and honoured guests* - commanding them to repeat after her a deadly ritual! They obeyed - as if hypnotised; they began to echo her rhythmic foot-stomping ritual: **left - right, right - left, left - right, right - left, left-right**; - the thunderous noise of a thousand feet (including those of the transported Pro-Vice Chancellor, Professors and Presenters) echoed around the *Corn Exchange* and far beyond. It was pure magic!

## De Montfort University Graduation Ceremony

on the morning of Thursday 23 October 2003 at The Corn Exchange, Bedford

### Conferment of the Award of Honorary Doctor of Arts on Geraldine Stephenson

Honoured Guests, Graduands. I am privileged to present to you:

GERALDINE STEPHENSON

on whom the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the Conferments Board, has resolved to confer the award of *Honorary Doctor of Arts* of this University. This honour is conferred on persons of intellectual, cultural and professional distinction and for whom the award of such a degree would be a proper form of recognition by the University.

Geraldine is a dancer, choreographer and movement advisor of the highest quality. She has contributed to numerous theatre, film and television productions as well as masterminded spectacular pageants and masques. As a teacher and lecturer she has captivated audiences across Europe and America. She is internationally respected and admired by producers and directors who call on her versatility and skill in all aspects of movement and dance.

Geraldine Stephenson was born in Hull in the mid 1920s. Her father was musical but there was no history of dance expertise in the family. She was taken to private classical ballet classes as a child to overcome shyness. As a young girl she could not have dreamed that this would lead to a long and distinguished career in the world of dance.

But we never forget a good teacher, and Geraldine's own progress was steered by three remarkable teachers. Her physical training teacher, an ex-Bedford student, recommended that she come to Bedford to train to teach PT - as it was then. At Bedford she was taught by Joan Goodrich, a dance lecturer who was introducing a new type of dance into the curriculum. Inspired by Joan's work in *Central European* or Laban dance, Geraldine went straight from Bedford to study under Rudolf Laban himself at The Studio in Manchester. It was Laban who gave Geraldine the skills and confidence that laid the groundwork for the future.

Geraldine's progress after leaving college was breathtaking. Having left Bedford in 1946, it took her only four years to be invited to advise on movement and dance in television - black and white at that time. And, in 1951, she was invited to choreograph the *York Mystery Plays*. It was a turning point. The experience made her realise that she had a gift for working, not only with individuals but with very large groups.

On television Geraldine has given advice on movement, and has choreographed dances in a dazzling variety of programmes, including *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *I Claudius*, *Persuasion*, *The Six Wives of Henry V111*, *War and Peace*, *Eastenders* and *The Two Ronnies*.

In the theatre she has worked with producers and writers,

such as Tom Stoppard, Trevor Nunn and Peter Hall. Her film assignments include work with Stanley Kubrick, Trevor Nunn and Stephen Poliakoff. And in the world of opera she has advised on a range of productions from *Falstaff* to the *Soldier's Tale*. To see leading actors in period costume (with little or no dance experience) transformed by Geraldine into confident, elegant, graceful dancers in fashionable ballrooms - is truly amazing. They dance the *Galliard*, the *Pavanne*, the mincing *Minuet*, the *Volta* - as if to the manner born.

It is difficult to identify highlights of such a star-studded career. But, if asked, Geraldine would probably choose her work with Maureen Lipman in *Re.Joyce*, with the two Ronnies in their TV spectacular, and with Julia Roberts in *Notting Hill*. And who could forget her choreography with 950 girl guides and 50 boy scouts in the Wembley arena!

For half a century Geraldine has remained the expert to advise the worlds of TV, theatre, film and opera. Throughout this period, and against the background of her demanding schedule, she has given numerous dance recitals, and lectured and taught in the UK and abroad. She has given time to be an expert witness for *British Actors' Equity* in legal cases involving dancers, actors and singers. She is also President of two charitable organisations.

What are the secrets of this success? Geraldine believes that it springs from what Laban taught her, not only about movement observation and the nature of movement, but also through his model of interpersonal sensitivity and the ability to empower others.

Colleagues speak of Geraldine's 'respect for, and understanding of, the people she is working with'. She has the ability to reach out and meet people. She enables them to be themselves more fully through the medium of movement and dance. An experience of working with Geraldine is not forgotten. You are never quite the same again.

And still she continues to choreograph and advise. This year will be her 23rd assignment to Choreograph the dances sections of the *Johann Strauss* Gala at the *Festival Hall*. It is characteristic of Geraldine that she insists she is still learning. Learning by working with, watching and listening to, her dancers and actors.

All too often the dedication of those behind the scenes, on whose skills the performance of others depends, is passed over. It is a great pleasure to be able to celebrate today all that Geraldine has given to the worlds of dance, theatre, film and TV.

Geraldine Stephenson, in the context of these distinguished achievements, I call upon The Pro Chancellor, Mr Martin Clarke, to confer upon you the degree of *Honorary Doctor of Arts*.



## Questions for the Experts

**The Editor questions Dr. Betty Redfern about her career and impressive contributions to the status and nature of dance and to aesthetic education.**

(Dr. Betty Redfern's distinguished career had a profound effect on the status and justification of movement and dance in education during a period when degree status was urgently sought. After experience as both a student and a member of staff at the *Art of Movement Studio* in Addlestone, Betty rose to the challenge of providing a philosophical justification for dance in education; she did so by studying with some of the most eminent aestheticians of her time in London, Glasgow and Lancaster. Her rigorous writings encompass dance, art, aesthetics, aesthetic education - both in and outside the arts - and, in addition to numerous articles, she has written the following books: *Concepts in Modern Educational Dance* (1973) Kimpton, re-printed (1982) Dance Books, *Dance, Art and Aesthetics* (1983) Dance Books, and *Questions in Aesthetic Education* (1986) Allen & Unwin. Betty was the Editor of the *Laban Art of Movement Guild Magazine* in the mid-sixties and her editorship had a salutary effect on its content and direction.)



Betty Redfern  
1958

**Q: Your higher education took place at Goldsmiths (English Literature and Music) and at Homerton College (Physical Education) where Modern Dance played a prominent part with Betty Meredith-Jones as your mentor. You were also a member of the well-known Manchester Dance Circle for several years and attended numerous courses with tutors including: Diana Jordan, Lilla Bauer, Sylvia Bodmer, Geraldine Stephenson, Lisa Ullmann and Laban himself and you attended the Art of Movement Studio in Addlestone on the One Year Special Course in the mid-fifties. How do you look back on that year's experience?**

With considerable pleasure - and as hard work coupled with a lot of laughter! I was delighted to be at the *Addlestone Studio*, in its very attractive surroundings, and most fortunate to be there in its early years, when both Laban and Lisa Ullmann (the courageous and enterprising founder of the first Studio in Manchester, and continuing as its director in Addlestone) took regular classes with the Special group. Marion North, Valerie Preston and Geraldine Stephenson completed the teaching staff. All were outstandingly good teachers, each with particular strengths and all with gimlet eyes! We had a good grounding in a range of activities,

almost always of a practical nature - as well as gardening and general supervision of the grounds in terms of keeping an eye open for invading pigs from the nearby farm. On one occasion Gerry (who did not know of this) was astonished to find herself suddenly facing an empty Saltarium, all her class having rushed out at the cry of "Pigs!" to do battle! In addition to classes, there were 'Creation Days', 'Showings', 'Open Days' and demonstrations. But somehow we found time, too, for spontaneous get-togethers to sing, dance, play, act, and so on. Laban and Lisa loved parties - especially performing party tricks. Like spell-binding magicians (which they often were, anyway!) they used lemniscates and often models to great effect. Laban was a superb mimic and had a wicked sense of humour. He could also be a big tease!



Lisa and Laban - magical moments!

A great deal of time was spent on training, which was somewhat disproportionate, I now think, in comparison with that devoted to composition and dance criticism. In fact, it sometimes seemed as if Lisa, for one, forgot that, with ages ranging from 27 to late 40s, we were not, nor aspiring to be, professional dancers! She herself appeared boneless, and just to watch her move was a revelation and an inspiration.

Our endeavours to create finished dances, whether alone or in groups, tended to be outside the class situation and then shown afterwards, with only gentle and not very detailed criticism, though sometimes they would be worked on further with help from a tutor. More opportunity for discussion and the exchange of views characteristic of artistic appraisal was much needed - indeed, more discussion in general (carried on endlessly, of course, among ourselves), and more consideration of Secondary school work!

**Q: Inevitably in your year at the Studio you would have undertaken some theoretical studies including 'Effort Theory' and 'Space Harmony'. How did you respond to those studies at the time?**

'Theory' was rarely separated from practice. It was through practical sessions that it tended to be introduced; or to arise as the result of questions from students either during a practical class or afterwards informally, e.g. over a cup of coffee with the tutor concerned (including Laban). As regards 'effort theory', I was particularly intrigued by the notion of 'effort attitudes' and 'drives' and the connections made with mental states and personality. But I was puzzled

by varying accounts of 'efforts' themselves (even by Laban on different occasions!), e.g. whether they were thought to occur in movements during sleep, or whether they were attributable to non-humans. (I well remember the Special Group being conducted by Lisa around the garden in the Spring to look at the various 'efforts' manifested by trees and plants.) I don't, however, recall any references in 'space harmony' sessions to Laban's more mystical ideas about universal forms, and so on. But if there had been, I should probably have swallowed them wholesale, given the comparison of movement harmony with music harmony; my fascination with the relating of crystalline structures to the human body and its movement possibilities; and the more than physical satisfaction I found in performing various scales and other circuits, especially when they were used artistically as in studies and dances composed, in particular, by Lisa and Valerie.



Betty teaching notation - 1959

**Q: You became Head of Physical Education and Dance at Crewe College of Education one of the few Colleges to gain early recognition for Dance as a Main Subject in the BEd. Degree. What justification for dance did you put forward to the University in order to try to achieve this acceptance as a degree-worthy subject?**

Initially, in drawing up syllabuses for both dance and physical education, I included an element common to both, i.e. a study of some aspects of movement outside dance.

It seemed, and still seems, to me important that intending teachers (and this was for B.Ed. degree) should be better aware of the significance of movement in everyday life e.g. as an expression of mood and personality and in interpersonal communication - including speech (audible movement, in Laban's terms). This proved to be over-ambitious and inadequately supported by available published material. Forty years ago the dearth of books and journals in these spheres as well as in modern dance is almost unimaginable today. I was relying too heavily on one person, i.e., Laban's, so-called findings, which, however, for the purposes of an academic course, were not considered to have been sufficiently tested in the public arena.

Focusing later exclusively on dance, I came to see that, as a distinct discipline conceptually independent of e.g. psychology or anthropology, it falls within the *aesthetic* category of experience and understanding.

**Q: In the late sixties you were driven rather than inspired (I gather) to embark on a serious study of Philosophy of Education at the London Institute of Education. What drove you to choose philosophy as a discipline - a discipline so seemingly remote from the joyous practicalities of movement and dance?**

I was driven in the sense that, during the many struggles I had with University representatives over the proposed B.Ed. syllabuses for movement and dance, I began to realise that some of the most awkward questions posed were of an essentially philosophical kind. Questions reducible, I suppose, at the risk of over-simplification, to: What do you mean? and How do you know? It was also clear that I needed to understand more about philosophical aesthetics.

So it was not a matter of pursuing a year's course in, e.g. history, nor of learning sets of ideas or 'philosophies' in the home-spun sense; but of undertaking (at my own expense!) a discipline which could be expected to tighten up my thinking and help me understand the ways in which claims and assertions of differing kinds might be distinguished and justified - particularly, I hoped, in relation to dance education. My fear was that, given the inauguration of this new degree and talk of, ultimately, a graduate teaching profession, in the absence of such an approach and a sound theoretical basis, dance courses in colleges would be threatened, with damaging knock-on effects for dance in schools.

Yes - philosophy *may* seem remote from the joyous practicalities of movement and dance (although I seem to remember being told at the Studio *Il faut souffrir pour danser!*). Certainly at first I found plunging into this new sphere (at the age of 45) anything but joyous! It can be very uncomfortable, even painful, to probe and make explicit one's underlying assumptions and beliefs, usually long-cherished but unexamined, and to have one's statements and their attempted justification subjected to critical scrutiny. On the other hand, philosophy *is* an activity and has its own delights and even, sometimes, certain creative and aesthetic aspects, as when trying to apply insights gained in one area to another, or to construct arguments and express them lucidly and economically.

**Q: In your book Concepts in Modern Educational Dance, published in 1973, your analysis of the then current theory and practice in dance education was constructively critical. How was your book received by the Art of Movement fraternity? Were you happy with its reception?**

Its reception was mixed! Since it had originated from requests to publish some of the lectures I had given to B.Ed. students in the *London Institute*, and judging by the complimentary letters that came, I was not surprised that in some quarters it was received enthusiastically, even with gratitude - an indication of the scarcity of critical material in this field.

By others it met with a distinctly unfavourable, even hostile, response. Some of those, however, appeared not to have read it very carefully, nor to have understood what I was trying to do. (I note that you speak of *constructive* criticism; this was my intention, of course.) While one person wrote that I had fallen over backwards to be fair to Laban and to emphasise the valuable aspects of his work, another accused me of stabbing him in the back! This naturally



## Questions for the Experts - continued

shocked me, but as this person made no attempt to raise, let alone discuss, specific points, I did not dwell on it long. What did concern me was that, even if I had been mistaken, some people seemed to regard Laban as a sort of *guru*, entirely beyond criticism. This cannot be healthy in any field of enquiry; only by public debate can progress be assured.

**Q: In the final paragraph of the Preface to Laban's *Choreutics* (1966) Lisa Ullmann wrote: 'I am greatly indebted to Betty Redfern, who read and re-read the draft of the first part and gave me invaluable help with the rendering of Laban's original text into the present form'. a) What were your impressions of this work at the time? And b) In retrospect what are your views of the book now?**

When Lisa first showed me Laban's manuscript written in 1939 with a view to its possible publication, I was excited and at the same time somewhat uneasy. Excited, because here was a clear exposition not only of Laban's choreutic and eukinetik principles, accompanied by instructive diagrams which also introduced some of his notation symbols, but also of those ancient beliefs, especially of the Greeks, about cosmic harmony and the harmonisation of the personality, etc. in which Laban's thought was embedded. Uneasy, because such ideas were presented not as ideas, but as facts resulting from empirical research.

I had no doubt that the manuscript *should* be published; not to have done so for fear that Laban's reputation might be diminished, as one reviewer implied, would, in my view, have been professionally unjustifiable. In retrospect I still consider this an important book for an understanding of Laban's ideas - where, in the common phrase, he was coming from; and Lisa's supplementary second part, giving suggestions for practical exercises based on a complete listing of his scales, rings, etc., is also most valuable.

**Q: In Chapter 6 of your book *Questions in Aesthetic Education* (1986) you addressed the question of 'Aesthetic Education Outside the Arts'. It would seem that you had a great deal of time for aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment as well as of non-art objects and activities. Do you still hold these views?**

Yes, I do continue to believe that appreciation of the natural environment, as well as of non-art objects and activities, is an important aspect of aesthetic education. Indeed, I think it may be questioned whether a person could be considered aesthetically educated who was totally lacking in such appreciation. But it does not necessarily result from experience of the arts, though this may help. The reverse is equally possible: one of the main sources of inspiration for much landscape painting and 'nature poetry', for example, is the natural world which, it may be assumed, has already been enjoyed aesthetically by the artist.

**Q: Your philosophical studies led you into the company of some eminent scholar-philosophers including: R.S.Peters, Louis Arnaud Reid, R.K. Elliott, Ruby Meager, Frank Sibley, Eva Shaper and many others. How influential to your own thinking were these people? Did their scholarship impinge in any way on your view of dance education and if so how?**

I first became interested in philosophical issues in aesthetic education through the writings of Louis Arnaud Reid - almost unique among philosophers at the time to be interested in dance. But it was during my year's course at the *London Institute* under the direction of his successor, R.S.Peters (R.K.Elliott was a member of his team) that I was initiated into the actual practice of *doing* philosophy and specifically in relation to education. (The option in aesthetics was no longer available.) This had a profound influence on my thinking, not in terms of *what* to think, but of developing certain habits and skills of thought. Consequently I became aware of, for example, some of the shortcomings of both the practice and theory of what was then known as 'modern educational dance'.

Ruby Meager, Frank Sibley and Eva Schaper were not much concerned as philosophers with education in schools and colleges; nor, although enviably knowledgeable about several of the arts, and proficient in at least one, were not familiar with dance. So they had little direct influence on my view of dance education. Nevertheless, since they, like R.K.Elliott, were especially distinguished in aesthetics and philosophy of art, it was largely owing to them that my understanding in these realms was deepened and enriched. It was particularly interesting to come to know Eva Schaper, with her background of German thought and culture (her mother had known of Laban and had seen a performance of *The Green Table* in Germany). It was a privilege to have encountered at first hand not only the intellectual passion and incisiveness of thought of these individuals, but also their intellectual humility, integrity, and openness of mind which informed all they did.



Inside LABAN Creekside

Photo by Pam Anderton



LABAN's spiral at Creekside

Photo by Pam Anderton

**Q: You were Editor of the *Laban Art of Movement Guild Magazine* in the mid-sixties and in one of your editorials (November 1965) you called upon the Guild (quoting Laban) to be more liberal in its outlook more amenable to wider interests and influences. What role do you think the present *Guild Magazine* might fulfil?**

I think that the substance of the Laban quotation, reprinted also in your editorial of the last issue, is still important to bear in mind; and that the Magazine should serve as a Forum for the exchange of views and critical debate, especially on controversial subjects (such as how and to what extent Laban's 'theories' require re-interpretation for today?), as well as for reports, reviews, etc. such as feature at present.

**Q: You attended the Opening Ceremony of the new *Laban* at Creekside last February and since then the**

## Movement in Nature and the Arts

- reflections on Dr Betty Redfern's views:

- a) that artists have found much inspiration in the natural world ... which has already been enjoyed aesthetically by the artist, and  
b) that our Magazine should serve as a Forum for 'critical debate, especially on controversial subjects such as:  
How and to what extent Laban's 'theories' require re-interpretation for today?'

### a) The Natural World:

That the natural world has been the inspiration for painters, musicians, poets, architects, photographers, dramatists, film-makers as well as choreographers, is abundantly evident; and 'movement' in the natural world has been a prominent aspect of that inspiration - from the gentlest movement of *flora and fauna*, clouds, tides, snow, ice, sun, moon, and the constellations, to the most violent of storms, fire, hurricanes, blizzards, cyclones, volcanos and earthquakes. That these natural phenomena in themselves have also provided artists with vivid aesthetic experiences is a reasonable assumption - not to mention their potential for symbolic expression of the human condition.



Cirrus clouds

Photo by Pam Anderton

**architecture has won the prestigious *Stirling Prize for The Building of the Year*. What were your impressions of this multi-million £ edifice and its published aims and objectives? What do you think Laban himself would have thought of this monumental development?**

I don't think I can add much to the glowing descriptions accorded to the edifice itself; it is difficult to separate my impressions of it as a building from all I saw taking place in the unbelievably numerous rooms, studios, etc. at the Opening Ceremony.

Our guided tour in and around these, rather in the manner of a *farandole*, followed by seeing the superb theatre also in action, was a truly moving experience - perhaps rather poignant for those of us who had known the Manchester/Addlestone Studios. I was delighted, of course, when LABAN won the *Stirling Prize* and now look forward to seeing the whole of the outside in daylight in its geographical and social setting.

I imagine Laban would have been thrilled - especially as he was originally a student of architecture and design and also because of its concern with the wider community; staggered at the thought of so much money being devoted to a movement and dance centre in *England*, and immensely proud of the vision and sheer hard work which brought it about. But I'm not sure Laban would have approved of the name. ...

As for its prospectus: again, most impressive - and ambitious. My personal hopes would be for future research in the field of personality assessment and related areas; and also into the life and achievements of Lisa Ullmann (whose centenary falls in 2007). But for her, I think it would be agreed, none of this would have happened, and probably little known of Laban in this country .



Electrical storm from David Curl's film 'The Call of Kakadu'

### Nature's Painters

Of Turner the painter - that master of movement in nature, one eminent art historian writes:

No one has ever known more about natural appearances, and he was able to fit into his encyclopedic knowledge memories of the most fleeting effects of light - sunrises, passing storms, dissolving mists, none of which had ever been set on canvas before. (1)

Even so, there is a long line of painters - from Michelangelo, Rubens, Titian, Raphael, to Blake, Picasso, Constable, Van Gogh and Monet - in whose works movement abounds! This not only applies to *represented* movement in Nature, but also to *virtual* movement - not least in abstract works where we find: perceived tension, visual attraction, visual weight, directional forces, expansion and contraction. These aspects of painting invite appreciative comments, typically: 'it has great vitality', 'it sets up exciting tensions', 'is tightly-knit', 'the lines dance', 'the yellow pulls against the blue', it is 'restless' or 'violent' - not to mention movement in the imagination of the spectator, for whom one writer suggests that: 'Chinese paintings are specifically for wandering in'. Picasso's *Guernica*, also, whilst full of *represented* movement, nevertheless, creates additional forces and tensions for aesthetic perception - purely by means of distortions and juxtapositions. One critic, discussing Soutine's picture *Landscape at Ceret*, says that we read the picture in terms of forces, a downward rushing and an upward striving movement, but that the picture evokes further experiences:

... of a kind that engage our whole bodies: swinging, diving, falling, staggering, skating, climbing, gliding, riding downhill, teetering on a cliff edge ... (2)

Such an imaginal response we find is essential to realising the work.

### Nature's Music and Movement

So permeated is our language with musical terms ('overstrung', 'well-tempered', 'tone', 'tonic', 'discord', 'harmony', to name but a few) that it will come as no surprise to learn that to the ancient mind the creation of the universe was itself an 'act of music'. All celestial and terrestrial bodies with their movements were orchestrated into a 'universal harmony'. The elements of fire, water, earth and air (hot, moist, cold and dry), with their wayward tendencies, were brought under the divine *maestro's* control. Nowhere, was this musical creation so succinctly expressed as in a poem by John Dryden, in 1687 - a period still under the powerful influence of, and belief in, the 'harmony of the spheres':

*From harmony, from heavenly harmony,  
This universal frame began:  
When nature underneath a heap  
Of jarring atoms lay  
And could not heave her head,  
The tuneful voice was heard from high:  
Arise, ye more than dead.  
Then cold and hot and moist and dry  
In order to their stations leap  
And music's power obey.  
From harmony, from heavenly harmony,  
This universal frame began;  
From harmony to harmony  
Through all the compass of the notes it ran.  
The diapason closing full in man.*

That Nature has been the inspiration for musical works,

is therefore not surprising, from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* to Holst's *Planet Suite*, for example, and as with painting, so with music, there are many *virtual* movement experiences to be gained where (paradoxically) no programme of *represented* movement exists; melodies 'rise and fall', harmonies 'expand and contract', the music 'hesitates', 'rushes on', 'ebbs and flows', 'trips along', 'marches', cadences 'come to a standstill', cadenzas 'cascade' with brilliant virtuoso execution, movements are 'stately', 'graceful' or 'turbulent'.

### Nature's sculptors and architects

At first glance the static forms of sculpture seem to display little movement; but such seemings are surely superficial - for we find sculpture variously described as 'virtual *kinetic* volume', 'the semblance of *living* form'. And perceived movement is abundantly evident in primitive and Greek sculpture - from the modelling and carving of religious amulets to the figures on the *metopes* and *pediments* of the *Parthenon*, - from the action reliefs of Michelangelo, to Henry Moore's *Reclining Figures*, which fuse both the human form with the undulations of the landscape.

Architecture, no less, reveals its own *virtual* and symbolic movement: ancient monuments and temples echo the pattern and movements of the constellations; the columns of Greek temples 'strive upward', the vaulted arches of cathedrals soar, 'spring from the tops of the Corinthian capitals', and 'a good spire is weightless, springing, an arrow aimed at the Almighty, carrying in its gesture the whole church with it'.



Lemniscate sculpture at LABAN Creekside

Notre Dame

Photo by Pam Anderton

### Nature's Poets

Perhaps only a Wordsworthian mind, so totally absorbed in Nature, could have captured the spirit of an all-pervading pantheistic power in his lines:

*That motion and the spirit that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts  
And rolls through all things*

But it is in a 'sense of the particular' (as opposed to the universal) that we find many nature poets excel: Gerard

Manley Hopkins, whose exact fidelity to detail, draws our attention to distinctive qualities of movement in nature.

*As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;  
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells  
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's  
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name ...*

And even the thrush:

*Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring  
The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing ...*

Of movement in dramatic poetry, we need look no further than Shakespeare, for King Lear's *crie de coeur* conjures up a mighty storm in which the elements are in league with his conspirators:

*Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow,  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!  
You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires, Vaunt-  
couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head; and thou all-shaking thunder,  
Strike flat the thick rotundity o'th'world,  
Crack nature's moulds, all germens spill at once  
That makes ingrateful man.  
(Act 3 Scene 2)*



'Lightning' from David Curl's film 'The Call of Kakadu'

### Nature's Choreographers and The Cosmic Dance

There is little need to rehearse the inspiration derived from nature in dance - whether in Nijinski's *Rite of Spring*, Cunningham's *Rainforest* or Alston's *Wildlife*, for we find a long legacy in primitive cultures of rain, fertility, harvest, mating, bird and hunting dances - even in the planetary motions emulated in the dances of the Dervishes. As late as the 16th Century in Elizabethan times the whole universe was conceived of as a 'cosmic dance'. Nowhere was this conception so vividly expressed as in Sir John Davies' poem *Orchestra, A Poem of Dancing* (1596) - 'the perfect epitome of the universe seen as a dance': (3)

*But why relate I every singular?  
Since all the world's great fortunes and affairs  
Forward and backward rapt and whirled are,  
According to the music of the spheres;  
And Change herself her nimble feet upbears ...*

*Learn then to dance, you that are princes born,  
And lawful lords of earthly creatures all;  
Imitate them, and thereof take no scorn,  
For this new art to them is natural.  
And imitate the stars celestial;  
For when pale death your vital twist shall sever,  
Your better parts must dance with them forever.*



Stars Celestial - the Cosmic Dance

### b) Critical Debate:

If we think that the Elizabethan world picture faded with that era we should again be deeply misguided - for many instances can be found where the pervasive notion of the 'cosmic dance' is demonstrably still alive and well - not least in Rudolf Laban's own writings (even in his Presidential addresses to the *Laban Art of Movement Guild*). The ceaseless movements of cosmic events continued to be an overwhelming source of religious, mystical as well as educational and aesthetic inspiration for Laban throughout his life, for he writes most significantly:

*... We must look reverently into the workshop of Nature  
where the spirit of dancing is created ... (4)*

*... in the whole of life, in every being is dance: the dance  
of the constellations, dance of the natural forces, dance  
of human actions and sensations, dance of cultures,  
dance of all arts. Man is a dancer. In the circle dance he  
strengthens his dancing ... (5)*

*... it cannot be said too often, and is a unique conception  
to be stressed repeatedly and to be remembered:  
movement, the path in our surroundings, the path as a  
sign, a symbol of the complex paths of the universe, - it to  
this that today we are directed ... (6)*

Laban's all-consuming inspiration, then, was from movement in Nature and the Universe - and this movement was paradigmatically manifest in man. References to man's natural movement abound in his writings: 'natural order', 'natural dynamic actions', 'scales based on natural movement', 'natural movement sequences', 'natural scales in the kinesphere', 'natural orientation in space', 'natural standard scales', 'man's natural way of moving', 'natural tendencies' - *ad infinitum*. Here then is Laban's 'Workshop of Nature' and from which inspiration he created his 'science of movement' which has so profoundly affected subsequent developments in movement therapy, personality assessment, movement pattern analysis, movement in industry, Labanotation, dance education and, not least, in recreational and community dance. But it is in recreational dance that Laban's influence has been so prepossessing - not least because of its rich source of aesthetic value.

### Nature or Art?

That 'Nature is not Art' is commonly accepted - the natural environment is not the product of intentional human creation. There are those, however, who find Laban's overriding interest and inspiration in the 'natural', 'harmonious' and 'cosmological' world quite unacceptable in the context of dance as an *art form* - as theatre dance. And it is in this 'professional' context that one eminent Laban scholar, at least, refers to *'The Irrelevance of Laban's Cosmological*



*interests' (7) and that Laban's 'dominant body behaviour method', whilst 'very pleasant to do ... is amateur, for it relies on no 'unnatural' training of the body through techniques'. Dr Valerie Preston-Dunlop (one of our Honorary Members) exclaims: 'what monumental differences in treatment and appearance the (choreotic) forms undergo when their context changes from self-centred activity to audience-gear art'. (my italics)*

This declaration may well come as a surprise to those who regard Laban's fundamental theories as inviolable; but Valerie, following in-depth research, maintains that Laban's original methods are manifestly an 'obstacle' to contemporary choreographers, otherwise, she says, 'every teacher of dance would be using the material and finding that it is fruitful', and she adds, 'they are not, and it is not. The removal of the obstacle is an essential step'. Valerie has, ostensibly re-orientated Laban's original choreotic theory to meet the needs of dance as a *performing art*.

Now we cannot but admire Valerie's years of painstaking research and discovery in her attempts to bridge the alleged 'monumental' gap between Laban's original choreotic practice and the needs of contemporary dance theatre. And in the wake of her revelations one can only assume that every teacher and contemporary choreographer will from henceforth be using Valerie's transposed material - 'finding it fruitful'. And if they are not, we must reasonably ask: Why not?

In the meantime, movement therapists, pattern analysts, personality assessors, and recreational dance leaders, will continue to profit from, and enjoy Laban's original practices (with or without their cosmological connotations) - finding them fruitful. Laban's interest in *natural movement* has opened up a rich vein of aesthetic value which for many has led to genuine *aesthetic* experiences and remains a major source of inspiration for 'amateurs' if not 'professionals' alike!

Perhaps it is the case that we all too readily dismiss the more humble aesthetic pleasures of Nature and natural movement in favour of the more prestigious forms of art - for as one aesthetician reminds us:

*'The aesthetic appreciation of nature differs from that of art, but the difference is less pronounced than many have assumed. Most importantly the appreciation of nature is no less rich or complex than that of art' (8)*

Notes and references:

1. Clark, Sir Kenneth *Civilisation* (1969) BBC p.294
2. see Elliott R K in 'Imagination in the Experience of Art' *Philosophy of the Arts* (1973) Macmillan
3. see Tillyard E W *The Elizabethan World Picture* Chap 8 'Cosmic Dance' (1998) Pimlico
4. Laban, Rudolf *Welt des Tanzers* p. 9 (1920) Walter Siefert
5. Laban, Rudolf *ibid.* p. 156
6. Laban, Rudolf *Des Kindes Gymnastik und Tanz* (1926) Stalling Oldenburg
7. Preston-Dunlop, Valerie *Dancing and Dance Theory* (1979) A Laban Centenary Publication: see also her 'Laban and choreological studies 1926-2001' in *Laban Guild Movement and Dance* Vol 20 No 1, Spring 2001
8. Matthews Patricia M 'Aesthetic Appreciation of Art and Nature' in *The British Journal of Aesthetics* Vol 41 No. 4 October 2001 p.410.

*Gordon Curl*

## View from America



Do Americans have the same understanding as the British of what constitutes recreational dance? Many of the Laban Guild events announced by Lydia Everitt in her E-flashes are examples of what I understand as recreational dance, as are Sam and Susi Thornton's Modern Dance Holiday courses, and the Guild's 'Day of Dance' on 27 March. Some of the activities at the *LabanConnect* event at the *Royal Festival Hall* in August were recreational as well as educational. It is great concept that we gain fun and aesthetic pleasure from choreographed dance which is not intended to be performed before an audience. It was a concept close to Laban's heart of which movement choirs were one form of expression.

In my experience it is a concept not much translated into practice in America. Square dancing is an example of truly recreational dance but there seems to be little of the type of session where a teacher/choreographer creates a theme, probably uses music, and produces a collaborative event which is 'performed' at the end of the session entirely for the experience which the participants get out of it and which will probably never be repeated. Geraldine Stephenson did this to an appreciative group at the *Motus Humanus* seminar in California in August and the Americans seemed to regard it as novel.

Movement conferences in America usually end with everyone dancing together but this is more a closing ceremony than a recreational session. The concept that people can come together to dance, in a guided way, just for recreation hardly seems to exist despite the immense amount of dance happening at colleges. When movement people meet to celebrate, as at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Laban/Bartenieff *Institute of Movement Studies* in New York recently, the events are primarily performance dance.

With regard to performance dance it is difficult to find any pure bred English modern dance and most of what is taught and promoted here originated in America. We might be able to claim an anglicised form of classical ballet but that is all.

Perhaps an opportunity was lost to build on Laban's heritage. He himself made such an amazing adaptation from his Central European and German past to the English way of life. Had any of his pupils worked to create a distinctively English culture of modern dance it would have been a great achievement, but it has not happened. However, we might be developing an English culture of recreational dance and, if so, the Guild is in the lead. Judged by all I have taken part in it is certainly not Germanic or American.

Whether it is possible to relate what we do in recreational dance to an up-dating of Britain's rich heritage of folk dance, I don't know. Laban often spoke of the need to develop folk dance which is modern and reflects contemporary issues (not only in England but everywhere). Could we be on the way actually to doing this?

If this is so, then while the Americans may continue to be exporters of performance dance, we British can become recognised as creators of modern recreational dance and exporters of the skills to make it happen. Such British bred skills could help us resist the *McDonaldisation* of the world. Otherwise, we might all find ourselves square dancing, which is fun, but not as satisfying as developing our home grown product.

*Warren Lamb*

## Stimuli for Dance from the Natural World

### **The Elements: Earth, Air, Water & Fire!**

*Anna Carlisle M.B.E shares with us her research notes for 'Alchemie'- performed in May 1998 at Theatre Le Traverse Rouen by the Anglo-French Company Sauter Le Pas for Jeunes Choreophees Du Normandie Festival. Choreography: Anna Carlisle/Phillipe Roux; Composer: Ric Graebner*

#### **EARTH**

**Expressive Mode:**

Dark/primordial/ritualistic

**Imagery:** Caliban:-earth-bound, pinned to earth. Strong gravitational pull. Inscriptions of body surfaces on soft earth/sand/mud/grass. Rituals which 'mark' the earth' floor. Intense internal focus. NB Sequences need to 'breathe' upwards.

**Juxtapositions:**

staccato rhythmic phrases (Kathak dance). Interweaves to create complex polyphonic rhythms. Interpose with long stillnesses - 'listening' to the earth. Use elevations which stress arrival. Intense fixed far focus. Use whole group of dancers?  
**THE CUBE: the material world**

#### **AIR**

**Expressive Mode:**

Unearthly, airborne, pneumatic, ethereal, crystalline

**Imagery:** Ariel gods/goddesses. The Angelic. Transformations of cloud formations - dissolution and reformation. The sculpting of space. Inscriptions/air patterns. Fineness/delicacy. OCTAHEDRAL forms. Use of poetic phrases.....?

"I dream of ascending a spiral staircase...  
Of dancing with clouds...  
Of conversing with angels..."

**Juxtapositions:**

airsteams/wind rhythms/gusts/whirls/eddies. The float to earth... The fall to earth... Walking the wind...  
  
Use solo material. Create 'thin' choreographic texture.

#### **WATER**

**Expressive Mode:**

Lyrical/ongoing/onflowing vital/alive/ebb and flow

**Imagery:** steams/rivers/waterfalls/fountains. Waves/undulations/swirls/whirlpools still waters. Seals/dolphins. ICOSAHEDRAL form.

Create 'river' of dancers with overlapping phrases....use random canons.

**Juxtapositions:**

Stillnesses... slow water/water sinking  
Explosive time/weight changes - splashes...spurts...cascades...  
fountains...droplets...  
Create choreographic 'wash' from stage right to left. Interweave of polyphonic forms and rhythms - rich texture -. Could thin out to leave quintet...?

#### **FIRE**

**Expressive Mode:**

Pyrotechnic! Explosive/fast/furious/intense. Sparky/brilliant/bursting. Smouldering... fuming... floating... HellFire!

**Set duet tasks:** theme of contact/release- Falling/catching/lifting. Bodies rolling... rising... entwining/colliding/elevating/sliding.

Create dense texture.  
Create pyramid

**TETRAHEDRAL FORM**

*What order? What mixture of elements to create alchemies?  
Composer wants to watch sessions - needs video as choreography comes together.*



## Dancing Quietly - Dancing Sense

(Dr Petra Kupperts is Assistant Professor of Performance Studies at Bryant College, Rhode Island. She is the author of *Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge*. Routledge: 2003 (where a longer version of this article can be found). She has created numerous art works within disability culture.)

Since 1970, my practice and resources as a dancer and choreographer have shifted from physical to perceptual challenges (Deborah Hay 1988: 22)

What does it mean to work with perceptual challenges? Where is the border between physical and perceptual performances?

Working with people in mental health contexts brought these questions to the forefront of my practice. My community dance work is process-based and conceived as an ongoing intervention, not as a progression towards a traditional dance performance. Issues of perception, silence and stillness connect my Laban-based movement work with my political interests in visibility and political expression. Within our culture, people with severe mental health problems often feel excluded from self-representation as the cultural histories of hysteria, depression and schizophrenia are histories of silencing, muting those who are different. While I was doing movement work with people in these contexts I soon realised the connection between the physical and the representational, their deep implication in each other. Many of my dancers' physical experiences seem to mirror their representational silencing. Some are people who find no space for themselves, their bodies, in their social and physical environment. As a result, 'centring exercises' as every performance class knows them can be difficult: people fall over, unable to find their centre. Drug-induced spasticity and rigid body-tensions can be problematic, but I think that there is more that prevents these dancers from claiming room for their bodies. Some have fundamental difficulties asserting their physical space, breathing, reaching, connecting and being in space. Having their personal space invaded again and again, having been forced to accept medications, having been excluded from housing, from neighbourhoods, etc., has left traces on these people's sense of self, and their ability to be in space.

Validating our spatial experience became an important aspect of our work. This meant that I had to rethink spatial and temporal aspects of embodiment, and politicise them: asserting the acts of breathing and being as interventions into the social sphere. We had to challenge perception itself and both dancers' and audiences' expectations of performed, active movement interventions.

### Space and Bodies

Attention to the physicality of perception in body work is at the heart of Rudolf Laban's writings on dance. In creating and theorising my work in the community, I have found his work valuable in order to think about the location of movement, perceptual acuity and a conception of time, motion and emotion as spatial phenomena. In some of his writings, initially formulated in the 1920s, Laban puts forward a wild vision of dance in which movement in space becomes the fundamental principle of life, a vision that links back both to German idealism and to contemporaneous theories of physics:

Today we are perhaps still too accustomed to understanding

objects as separate entities, standing in stabilised poses side by side in an empty space. Externally, it may appear so, but in reality continuous exchange and movement are taking place. Not for a moment do they come to a complete standstill, since matter itself is a compound of vibrations.' (Laban 1966: 4)

Laban locates emotion, individuality and space-sense in movement. Dance becomes an expression of the fluid, changing, mobile nature of living:

'Dance is the transition into a world in which the illusory, static appearances of life are transformed into clear spatial dynamism. Awareness of this spatial world and its exploration open up a horizon of unexpected breadth. From the simplest motion to the artistic creation of dancing, the flowing stream of movement expresses dynamic space, the basis of all existence.' (Laban 1966: 93/94)

In order to practically explore this vision of dance as an 'opening' into an 'other' world, Laban-based dance can use exercises to locate the body in space, explore the extension of the body in its kinesphere, and analyse physical movement in its dynamosphere, or the effort or 'colour' of the movement. In our dancing, we used these movement vocabularies as our scaffold to ground physical expression. The spheres create spaces into which participants could map themselves, and could feel their own extension in their environment.

### Traces

As we started to think about sharing our work, validating it outside our own community, a performance of our moving bodies in a traditional dance format seemed inappropriate and was not desired by most of the dancers. Other strategies of presentation and representation needed to be found. In order to intervene into the regimes of invisibility that surround mental health, we took the movement back - we travelled inside, on the same trajectory that Deborah



Photo by The Olimpias

Hay explored. Through relaxation exercises and dream journeys, we explore the inner aspects of movement, the dynamics of moving inside, in our thoughts, with minimal traces on the physical body. These intense moments of self-presence, being inside, but fully engaged in one's physical/mental experience are documented in our video installation *Traces*. Three monitors in a small cubicle invite the spectator to come, sit down on comfortable cushions and to witness and engage with the dancers of the screens. The installation does not document those aspects of our work in which we take to the space and engage in 'outer'

dance, but instead focuses on the dream extensions and the minimal traces on the dancers' bodies.

As an aesthetic strategy, *Traces* refuses the 'normal' images of people with mental health problems: hysterical displays of bodies out of control, fits, excess and 'being outside one's body'. Neither does *Traces* explore 'positive images' - it does not attempt to normalise experiences which are 'different', and which point to different embodiments, different perceptions and different awareness. In *Traces*, what you see is what you get - concentrated faces, breathing bodies, close-ups of tiny movements dispersing themselves across body terrains. The participants and their bodies remain unknowable. The spectator does not have access to the 'truth' about these people, their experiences and thoughts. The silence of the non-hysterical body offers the sanctuary in which we can experiment with the meaning of physicality.

Andre Lepecki writes about the vanishing performance in the in-between spaces, those moments between moments, and their implications for dance criticism:

'In order to track down what invades the unstable, vagrant, nomadic space of choreography-in-writing, of choreography and writing, one must pay careful notice to (must pay homage to, must invoke, problematize, dance and write on) those suspended moments, where gestures, sounds, landscapes are not (yet) visible as dance but point to the choreographic tension between physicality and imagination.' (Lepecki 1996: 76)

For Lepecki, dance writing deals with traces, ghosts and memories. Similarly, writing and reading about *Traces* requires the activation of and engagement with an 'other' perception, a perception trained onto the minute, the silent, the still in a perception which is a dance itself, a dance between the visible and invisible. The dance of *Traces* emerges when the spectator watches the still faces surrounding her in the installation cubicle, following their unfolding in space through visual, aural and imaginative clues. Even at the moment of presentation (in the virtual, the space of the installation), this dance is already gone and becoming: it is a dance which denies the fixing of people whose bodies have historically been read for symptoms of inner states. The bodies on the screen remain liminal, their full spatial extensions are present as ghostings. They are not captured, and yet they clearly live. The witnessing spectator can create a new dance of encounters, flows and spaces.

The differentiation between the physical and the imagination is imaginary: movement is what drives both, and lets each partake in the other. The vibrations or energetic states of one feed the other, and the visible is only one aspect of the unfolding dimensions of moving. The Other dances (physically and imaginatively) into sight in the silence of the in-between.

### References:

Hay, Deborah (1988) 'Remaining Positionless', *Contact Quarterly* 13, 2: 22-23  
Laban, Rudolf (1966) *Choreutics*, ed. Lisa Ullmann, London: Macdonald and Evans.  
Lepecki, Andre (1996) *As If Dance Was Visible*, *Performance Research* 1, 3: 71-76.

*Petra Kupperts*

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## Laban in Places in Worcester

In October 2003, *Laban in Places* joined forces with the *Association for Dance Movement Therapy UK* to run a joint workshop in Worcester. The tutor, Uma Mather, who took over at short notice, led us through a day exploring the Laban fundamentals of body space relationship and effort.

After a rather late start, (due to the difficulty some participants had in finding the venue!) we began by moving through the hall, using different ways of greeting and connecting with each other. We then worked in pairs, taking turns to 'try on' different movement qualities, expressed through the dynamics of weight space flow and time.

As a whole group we learned a short sequence of movements to Barber's Adagio for Strings, and had time to develop and personalise this on our own. We then joined with others to develop our dances further; it was fascinating to see how we had all created very different dances from the same basic materials.

After lunch, we explored movement affinities, and experienced how the quality of movement changes when we move from the centre rather than the periphery.

The last session of the day involved a consolidation of what had been learned so far: first working in two groups, taking our own preferred elements from all the different strands of the day, and then weaving all of these together to form a final whole group dance which came together with great fluidity.

The feedback from the participants was generally very positive; we all felt that it had been a nourishing and creative day, and Uma's sensitive leadership was much appreciated, with the group feeling both challenged and supported. The opportunity to explore different types of movement relationship (individually, in pairs, trios and large/ small groups) was valued; one suggestion made was that it might have been helpful to have less material and more opportunity to improvise. Practical arrangements for the day were generally felt to be good, although the need for better directions to the venue was recognised. The scones and cakes, supplied for the breaks were much appreciated!

Despite the low numbers, this was a great workshop, and we hope to build on the collaboration between *ADMT* and the *Laban Guild* for future events. Thanks to Uma and all those involved in making this a successful day.

*Jane Cullum*

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Please send to the Editor and make cheques payable to the Laban Guild



**Enid Platt**

20th January 1918 - 24th November 2003

On her last evening Enid sat down in her chair to look at a photograph album, and quietly left us. At her funeral service Dawn Buckle said, "I know that I speak for many here when I say that knowing Enid has enriched my life."

After her initial teacher-training Enid was inspired to continue her studies wherever she could, applying what she learned to her teaching in school whilst developing her own ideas. After the War she attended weekly evening classes for teachers at the *Art of Movement Studio* in Manchester. Under the guidance of Lisa Ullmann, Enid developed her powers of observation and deepened her understanding of the significance of Movement. Enid's pioneering work in school attracted attention and she was advised to take the *Third Year Physical Education Course* at Homerton College, Cambridge, where she was delighted to be taught by Betty Meredith-Jones. Dawn Buckle remarks:



Photo from Ruth Hargreaves

"Elsie Palmer recruited her into that remarkable team of Lancashire PE Advisers, who must have inspired and influenced thousands of teachers over the years to improve the physical education of tens of thousands of children ..."

Enid became one of the principal teachers and trainers of the *Keep Fit Association* for the North West Region and Manchester District. She was a highly respected and well-informed examiner, always wanting the candidates to really understand the principles of movement."

Dr Valerie Preston-Dunlop also writes: "Enid was a champion for amateur dance all her life. The *Manchester Dance Circle*, led by Sylvia Bodmer...was Enid's passion." Sylvia invited her to become Co-Director with her and they worked very closely together, with Enid taking sole charge after Sylvia's illness. Valerie continues: "Towards the end of Sylvia's life, we at LABAN wanted to make a film of her work from the time she joined Rudolf Laban in 1921 and including her compositions with the *Manchester Dance Circle*. Enid came to the *Laban Centre* in New Cross and through her we were able, with *Transitions Dance Company*, to create a series of Sylvia's studies and the early training exercises from the twenties. Enid was not young, at the time, but her vitality and dexterity was superb and she attracted immediate respect from the dancers."

When Ruth Hargreaves wrote a piece for the *Guild Magazine*, for Enid's eightieth birthday, she said: "Enid is never short-tempered or impatient with anyone. She welcomes all (newcomers and old-stagers) with open arms and her delightful smile. She makes everyone feel special ...". So it was, throughout her life.

*Sheila McGivering*

**Geraldine in Scotland**

During October 2003, Geraldine Stephenson paid a brief visit to the Aberdeen area in North East Scotland, and seemed slightly surprised to discover a vibrant community in the area! She worked in two venues: *City Moves*, the dance base in Aberdeen, and *Woodend Barn* an *Arts Centre* on Royal Deeside. At *City Moves* she gave two versions of her lecture-demonstration: one to people with a background in dance who were or had been performers or practitioners; the other session was mainly older people who worked regularly with a senior performance group. She shared the wide experience of her life and work in dance - particularly of course in choreography, demonstrating how rooted she was in Laban's movement philosophy. There were also glimpses of the assistance Laban gave her when she was setting out on her career and the ways in which his wise counsel encouraged her.

At the *Arts Centre* in Banchory, Geraldine's lecture to a 'random' audience was received very warmly as the audience learned with vivid physical demonstration from Geraldine of the movement philosophy underpinning all of her work. Everyone enjoyed the film clips illustrating the points she was making. To the surprise of all, a member of the audience who lives locally, revealed that she taught *T'ai Chi* at Adlestone on her return to the UK after several years in China.

Geraldine also took a class with a group of older people in Banchory who had minimal dance experience; with her lively teaching and chat she gave them an insight into what is involved in getting a sequence into a film. Geraldine's openness, sense of fun and her deep knowledge of movement and dance were greatly appreciated by all who came into contact with her.

By coincidence, in the week following Geraldine's visit, *City Moves* Aberdeen ran a workshop by the dance artist Claire Pencak, introducing the movement principles 'used by some of the early exponents of modern dance - including Doris Humphries and Rudolf Laban'.

*Sheila Hargreaves*

**Observing Children Moving**

by Dr Margaret Whitehead Past-President of *The Physical Education Association UK* and formerly Principal Lecturer *De Montfort University*

(Announcing a CDRom to support movement observation of children aged 3-7 years)

Movement observation was a key aspect of my training to be a physical education teacher and remained a vital part of my teaching of dance and other physical activities throughout my career. I am enormously grateful to the insights of Laban in relation to movement analysis and observation, conveyed to me by those who taught me at Bedford.

It is very worrying to know that movement analysis and movement observation have all but disappeared from *Initial Teacher-Training*. Without this understanding and skill a teacher may not respond to the needs of the pupils and learning is less likely to occur.

To fill this gap, *PEAUK* set up a research project to produce a resource to support movement observation. After three years of work I am delighted to report that the interactive CDRom 'Observing Children Moving' is now on the market. While it is directed particularly at practitioners working with children aged 3-7 years, the CD has a wide use and has been enthusiastically received by *HEI*, *TTA* and *OFSTED*. The resource can be used as a self study programme or as material for seminar discussion or lectures.

Please find enclosed in this Magazine a flier with further details of 'Observing Children Moving'. I very much hope that *Laban Guild* members will find the CD useful.

**Walli Meier's 6-week Training Course for Teachers**

Thank you *DanceEast* for organising another Training Course for Teachers with Walli Meier. For those of us who attended it was a privilege to be taught by Walli, not only because we were in the company of a highly experienced and knowledgeable teacher, but also because Walli presents the depths of Rudolf Laban's analysis of movement in such a clear and accessible way

We were guided through the themes of Body, Action, Space, Dynamics and Relationships. Walli taught us much in such a short space of time, just two hours per session, but she helped us through the themes by linking them each week and reminding us of the work we'd done in the previous sessions, therefore threading it all together into a whole, (her gift to each of us of an icosahedron will be a constant reminder of the course!).

Walli set us homework tasks - giving us sequences to work on which were set out in *Labanotation*, thus encouraging us to extend our learning into new areas. At first all those strange symbols can seem daunting, but here again Walli quickly helped us to overcome our fears of "not being able to understand". Our powers of observation were also developed throughout the course, not only by watching each other, but also through questioning our own body movements, thus enabling us to clarify our movements. Walli stretched us just that bit further each time, drawing out our individuality and uniqueness, which was what Laban found so intriguing about the human race.

Part way through the course I broke my foot and had to miss session three. In the final sessions, unable to put weight on my foot I worked from the floor. It meant I had to be creative in new ways, and I have to say at times it felt not only exhausting but

also frustrating. But it did make me reflect upon how sensitive we, as teachers need to be, especially when we approach someone who can only work from the floor, who is unable to stand at all. It could feel very threatening, therefore, we need to be aware of how we move towards that person.

There was so much food for thought - but as Walli kept reminding us we learn by doing! Whether you are an experienced dancer or a complete novice Walli will give you a movement experience never to be forgotten. Take it from one who knows! I first met Walli many years ago, in the early 1980s, at *Surrey University*. I had just started a *Community Dance Leaders Training Course* (in Ipswich) initiated by the *Laban Guild* and *Suffolk Dance*, and part of our remit was to attend an *AGM and Day of Dance*. On that day in Surrey I participated in Walli's class. This lady - a ball of energy and enthusiasm - entered my life. We danced with balloons and I never forgot the endless variety of movement experiences in such a short space of time and with a simple prop.

Our Wednesday sessions at *Northgate Arts Centre* have been the same, providing us with a whole host of ways to explore what often appears to be a simple movement. And this is why Laban's analysis helps all of us to have a deeper understanding of movement possibilities. Thank you Walli for yet another fantastic training course. Your knowledge and understanding of Rudolf Laban's analysis of movement is an inspiration to each and every one of us, whatever our ability or experience. How very fortunate we are to Walli Meier here on our doorstep in Suffolk!

*Elizabeth Norman*



Achieve your ambitions through unrivalled dance artist training at undergraduate and graduate level in world leading dance facilities.

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Centre for Dance and Performance Studies, London  
Supported by the Arts Council of England and the National Lottery Fund







## february

- 4th THE AUSTRIAN CONNECTION Lecture:  
Dr Ana Sanchez-Colberg and Dr Andrew Amort
- 25th THE GERMAN CONNECTION Lecture:  
Dr Valerie Preston Dunlop Laban Creekside London

## march

- 3rd THE LABAN DIASPORA Lecture:  
Dr Anita Donaldson and Dr Ana Sanchez-Colberg Laban Creekside London
- 27th Celebration at LABAN and Guild AGM LABAN Creekside London

## april

- 17th Laban in Places - Bracknell (see below)

## may

- 20th and 27th evenings - Wendy Hermelin - 'Elements of Stitch, Glass and Footwear' (see below)

## june

- 3rd evening - Wendy Hermelin - 'Elements of Stitch, Glass and Footwear' (see below)
- 12th Laban in Places - in Swansea (see below)

## Laban based dance class listings

- Bromley: Avril Hitman Wednesday afternoons  
020 8467 3331 Thursday mornings  
Community classes for people with learning difficulties
- Cambridge: Maddy Tongue Wednesday mornings  
01223 302030 over 55s - open class
- Swindon: Kathy Geddes Saturday mornings, three separate classes  
01793 463210 for 4 - 5 years, 6 - 8 years, 9 - 13 years

## Laban in Places

- Laban in Bracknell, Berks - Saturday 17th April  
Make a Dance day for those who love to dance and to create one. Tutor Gill Hibbs
- Laban in Swansea - Saturday June 12th  
Build a Dance from start to finish in the day. Tutor Wendy Hermelin
- Laban in Chesterfield - date to be confirmed  
Some sound Laban foundations and lots of fun. Tutor to be confirmed

Prices: Members £25 and £17. Non members £30  
Enquiries and bookings to Lydia Everitt. Tel 01747 826007 or [lydia.everitt@btinternet.com](mailto:lydia.everitt@btinternet.com)  
(We also have Laban in Haslemere in discussion)

## 'Elements of Stitch, Glass and Footwear' - Ilminster, Somerset

Stitched textile constructions, glorious stained glass and unusual shoes will provide an interesting environment for three, open, Laban-based, creative dance classes, using the exhibition pieces as starting points. The dance work will be videoed. Contact: The Meeting House Arts Centre 01460 55783

## community dance teachers courses

We are currently negotiating three new courses. These courses are highly regarded within the profession, operate on a part time basis in an area close to you and ensure that graduates are eligible for insurance.

STARTING April 2004 in County Westmeath, Ireland, in conjunction with Midland Arts, our Stage 1 Course. For further details, please contact Shane Brennan at [midlandarts@eircom.com](mailto:midlandarts@eircom.com)

STARTING September 2004 in Chelmsford, in conjunction with Essexdance and New Hall School, our Stage 1 Course. For further details, please contact Ann Ward, [annonhols@hotmail.com](mailto:annonhols@hotmail.com)

STARTING September 2004 in Newbridge, Co Kildare, our Stage 2 Course. For further details, please contact [lrussell@kildarecoco.ie](mailto:lrussell@kildarecoco.ie)

## Laban Guild Day of Dance and AGM

Saturday 27th March 2004

*(It is now two years ago since the Guild Council approached Dr Marion North - then Director of the Laban Centre at Laurie Grove - with a request that we might hold our Annual Day of Dance and AGM at the rapidly developing new building at Creekside. Marion agreed to this request 'in principle' for March 2003 but this proved administratively too early and March 2004 was therefore confirmed, subject to the new Director (Anthony Bowne's) approval - which was generously forthcoming; preparations and plans were therefore initiated for this special event. In the meantime, members of Council were privileged to attend both the Opening Ceremony of the new Building as well as Marion's Farewell Celebrations at the lavish new facilities - events which have been recorded in our Magazine. Sue Grover, one of our new members of Council, takes up the story:)*

In mid-November (2003) Jill Goff and I set off to meet Nicky Molloy, Events Manager, and Gary the Catering Manager, at LABAN Creekside to finalise arrangements for the AGM/Day of Dance.

It was my first visit to LABAN and, following the announcement of the building's award of the *Stirling Prize for Architecture*, I was very much looking forward to the experience. I wasn't disappointed. From the outside-in it is amazing - a feast for all the senses, from the soft rainbow of colours reflecting the changing daylight, the brilliant green of the new grassy 'folded' earth landscaping - to the use of colour, materials and shapes inside. The whole combines to create a stimulating environment within which to study dance and its many aspects.

It is very exciting for the Guild to have the opportunity to taste this atmosphere and be able to use LABAN studios and other facilities. Council and LABAN have worked hard to plan and organise an interesting and varied programme for Guild members to enjoy. In addition to the business of the AGM itself, which is always dealt with efficiently, and the *Laban Lecture* given by Sir Walter Bodmer, we have

arranged a choice of four very different dance workshops. Two will be led, as advertised, by Michael Platt and Janet Lunn and the remaining two by MA students presently studying with Valerie Preston-Dunlop, entitled *Laban Then and Laban Now*. Following all that activity I am sure we will be only too happy to watch someone else dancing! As announced previously, therefore, the LABAN resident Dance Company, *Transitions* will be performing for the *Laban Guild* by special arrangement.

Last but not least, there will be a final opportunity to gather and comment on the day's experiences - spending a little more time with friends, old and new, at a Gala Buffet Supper which will be made available.

So, the stage is set and all we need is as many members and friends as possible to come along and join us for what promises to be a day to remember. The booking form is included in this Magazine so fill it in NOW, and please take advantage of the supper - it is good value for money and a relaxing end to what will be an exciting day.

**Travel:** Don't be put off by the journey. I found it very straightforward, getting on the *Docklands Light Railway* at *Monument*, (*District and Circle*) and travelling to *Greenwich*. Alternatively the *Jubilee Line* joins the *DLR* at *Canary Wharf*. Again alight at *Greenwich* - I am told the walk is more pleasant than that from *Deptford*. However, stay on the main Creek Road and don't turn left until you reach Creekside itself. You will see LABAN ahead of you. There is a good map on LABAN'S website, [www.laban.org](http://www.laban.org).

*Sue Grover*

## subscriptions

Thank you to all those members who have sent in their subscriptions early. The names of everyone paying before 31 January, including all members who pay by bankers order, will be entered in a free draw for a special prize. The winning name will be drawn at the AGM at *Laban*, Creekside, in March. We hope that all our members will wish to continue their subscriptions now that we can offer an enlarged magazine, regular courses and many other benefits, but please remember that resignations must be received before 29th February, or you will remain liable for your subscription for 2004. All subscriptions will be acknowledged, but this may not be before April. Please forgive any delay. As costs rise inexorably, but unfortunately, membership numbers do not, we have to contemplate an increase in subscription rates. We are very reluctant to do this and an alternative is to increase membership. Please do your best to interest others in our work and to join the Guild. Publicity material is always available from the Membership Secretary.

## keep up to date

Make sure you are receiving our monthly e-flash service. To register, contact Lydia on [lydia.everitt@btinternet.com](mailto:lydia.everitt@btinternet.com)





Geraldine Stephenson  
Hon. D. Arts  
at De Montfort University  
Graduation Ceremony