



*Movement and
Dance*

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letter

(The Guild greatly appreciated the hosting of its Day of Celebration and AGM in March by the new Director of LABAN; Anthony Bowne). Anthony writes to members of the Guild:

I was enormously proud, in my first year as Director of LABAN, to be able to welcome the Guild to our new home in Deptford for your Day of Celebration.

In my welcome address I was able to tell members a little of what we have achieved over the last thirty years under the inspired direction of Marion North. From the move from Addlestone to New Cross in the early 70s to the occupation of our new 'building of the year' premises on Deptford Creekside in 2003, the organisation has grown into the largest provider of contemporary dance tertiary training in the world. That journey has been characterised by a series of firsts; the first BA in Dance in the UK, the first MA, the first PhD, the first community dance training programme, the first postgraduate training company *Transitions*, and so on and so on. Most recently we secured premium level funding from the *Higher Education Funding Council* for all of our UK and EU undergraduate students, and built the world's largest and best equipped training facility for contemporary dance.

Marion North's retirement in August 2003 after 30 years at the helm has given us the opportunity to re-affirm our commitment to the work of Rudolf Laban. Our occupation of the new building coincided with the third change of title during our thirty years in London first *Laban Centre for Movement and Dance*, then *Laban Centre London* and now simply, LABAN - the one word remaining which points to the heart of our dance artist education and training philosophy. Our focus, through components such as Laban analysis in the undergraduate programme, and the new MA degree in *European Dance Theatre Practice*, is in the relevance of aspects of Laban's work in the nurture of today's contemporary dance artists. It is a focus forward and a focus which builds on collaborations with others, such as William Forsythe, engaged in the use and development of Laban's work in contemporary dance making.

I think that the years ahead will be exciting ones for all of us who value the work of Rudolf Laban and I look forward to working ever more closely with the Laban Guild.

Anthony Bowne

Members of the Guild offer their warm congratulations to Dr Marion North CBE PhD, DArts DLit on receiving the honour of a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in recognition of her services to dance.

editorial



Members will warm to the closing remarks of LABAN's new Director Anthony Bowne when he says his letter that he 'looks forward to working ever more closely with the *Laban Guild*'. Nothing could be more pleasing music to the ears! We are indeed grateful.

As predicted, community dance dominates our contents page - introduced appropriately by Ken Bartlett, the well-known Director of the *Foundation for Community Dance*. Our own members take up the challenge with contributions highlighting the benefits, disability projects in Rhode Island, the Guild's involvement, and the aesthetic values inherent in community dance.

Critical debate is undoubtedly the blood stream of any progressive organisation and we are delighted that Valerie Preston-Dunlop (one of our Honorary Members) has seen fit to comment on Jim Schofield's engaging article 'Dance in the Park' in our last issue. We anticipate a further contribution from Jim and would welcome in our next issue a tidal wave of views on the values (or otherwise) of 'choreutics' as a mainstream aspect of Laban's heritage.

Critical appreciation is also a commitment of arts' devotees and it is no small surprise that Michael Platt's *Suffolk Youth Theatre* Brechtian production captures high praise; again Laban was deeply devoted to movement in drama and would undoubtedly have revelled in this Laban-inspired production at the Wolsey Theatre Ipswich. Initiatives such as this deserve all the support we can give them - that is if they are to survive and flourish! (see Mike Kwasniak's impressive montage on the back cover).

We never cease to be amazed at Pam Anderton's graphic skills as she collates and combines striking images from our movement choirs and community dance courses.

With the fulsome blessing of our President Dr Geraldine Stephenson and the Guild Council we have launched an appeal for funds to fulfil more effectively our Constitutional aims and objectives - particularly in respect of regional initiatives and projects in movement and dance - initiatives which bear all the marks of potential or existing excellence. We refer members and friends to our enclosed letter of appeal.

Readers will also find in our pages a very moving tribute to Audrey Bamba OBE by one of her former students - Margaret Talbot OBE; we cannot but wholeheartedly endorse her sentiments.

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so what is community dance?

(Ken Bartlett is Director of the Foundation for Community Dance. A former teacher, School Inspector and Head of Cultural Services for a local authority, Ken is Chair of East London Dance, a Board member of Yorkshire Dance, and a member of the steering Group on dance and disability, and has taught and lectured in the USA, Australia, Latin America and Europe. Under his direction the Foundation for Community Dance has significantly widened its influence with dance, the arts and beyond).

Our central premise, at the *Foundation for Community Dance*, is that every body can and does dance - and through the act of dancing, creating dances, performing dances and developing a critical stance in relation to those dances, a number of essential human benefits follow: creativity and focussed expression, self-worth and personal development, social skills and responsibilities, improved health and well being and cultural and community identities.

Well, that's the theory but how does it stand up to a bit of prodding and poking?

- Is every kind of dancing, community dance? - Are all communities doing community dance? - Does the very act of dancing automatically lead to the benefits outlined above?

Well, I suppose the answer to these questions is a qualified yes - but!

I am concerned about three things in relation to community dance: values, purposes and quality, and I use these three notions as a filter through which I guide my thinking about what community dance is and might be and how I might recognise it when I see it.

When the *Foundation for Community Dance* undertook a national mapping exercise in 2000 we asked practitioners to consider what they thought were the underpinning values of their work. Some of these values stemmed from deeply held, yet constructed beliefs about the kind of world people want to inhabit. They are often optimistic, progressive, aspirational and about making the world a 'better' place for all. Others are about the contribution dance can play in developing their 'utopian' vision, its contributions to the lives of individuals, communities and society as a whole. What is clear is that everyone working in the sector is fundamentally celebrating the human body and that people are recognising the wholeness of the people they work with - their physical, emotional, psychological, intellectual and social lives.

Practitioners went further than this though. They expressed views about the world that included human rights and equality of opportunity. They were concerned with fulfilling human and creative potential and in the importance of respect for and value of the individual. They wanted people, through their dance, to feel empowered and enabled to express that power for themselves, each other and the communities they engage with.

These values are really important to the practitioner as they are 'internal drivers', they are the why we get out of bed on cold winter mornings to lead a session. They are in addition really useful bridges for people we might want to work with who are not concerned with dance, but are concerned with people and share at least some of these values.

So when I'm looking at community dance in practice I seek to find these underpinning values in the way people organise and structure their work in the community; how they deal with individuals and/or groups; how they teach, encourage and support progression, how they manage to include people and ensure their voices are heard through their dance and how they promote a sense of purpose and achievement.

But why are people so keen to involve members of the community

in dance? Surely they can be empowered in other ways and could be members of all kinds of groups concerned with the 'wholeness' of their being. There is a range of purposes behind our work with communities but the four key characteristics that I look for are:

- * **Learning the art of dance - its technical skills and how to perform it**
- * **Making dance as artists - with an emphasis on artistic development and creativity**
- * **Using dance as a vehicle for personal and social development and to build or recapture community identity and sustain cultural traditions**
- * **Using dance to better understand issues and ideas of concern to the participants**



These are not of course mutually exclusive and even within one session each of these characteristics might emerge and be at the foreground of the activity. The key however lies in the value base - how the different experiences are structured and how people are treated within the experience so that both people and the dance are of importance and the different needs of individuals are supported within the experience so that they feel and are genuinely included throughout.

The issue of quality is one that community dance practitioners have sought to address throughout its existence as an identifiable part of the dance spectrum. Within the concert/theatre tradition what appears to be being judged is performance. Performance within prevailing ideas about how a dancer should look, how old they should be, how steps should be performed and other issues such as athleticism and virtuosity. But once one has said that every body can dance with intention and purpose and we look at the range of bodies participating in community dance these prevailing notions seem to provide only a partial way of looking at quality. We may 'like' or 'dislike' the work of company X or choreographer Y and whilst our liking may be valid as an opinion this is not necessarily a measure of quality.

What our research established from across the country is that in looking at quality in community dance the specific context of the work needed to be understood before rushing to judgements or generating any criteria for quality. Such factors as: the previous experience of dance the participants have had; the needs of boys and young men set against those of girls and young women; the ages of the people in the group; a new group or an established group, the priorities and experience of the leader/teacher; the ambitions of the stakeholders for the initiative; the length of the programme and so on are elements of the context we need to think about.

However there were certain key areas in which practitioners felt it was possible to generate benchmarks of quality. These are:

Quality of purpose- a recognition that practitioners had to have

so what is community dance?

a vision about why they were undertaking a particular piece of work or making an intervention in any community context.

Quality of planning and communication - the importance of a clear route map open to flexibility and change, common understanding, agreement and shared values about the initiative by all the stakeholders and being realistic about what is achievable.

Quality of Practice and Process - is it ethical, responsible and safe, is it respectful of difference and the learning styles of the participants, and does it provide a sense of achievement and offer opportunity for reflection?

Quality of Engagement - this was the most complex area in which to identify quality benchmarks. However, we identified ten headings under which practitioners said they applied a quality benchmark. They were looking for participants to demonstrate, at an appropriate level:

- * **Readiness and openness to experience**
- * **Focus and attention**
- * **Competence appropriate to the task(s)**
- * **Active creative contribution(s) and problem solving**
- * **Responsiveness**
- * **Consciousness and reflection**
- * **Preparedness to take risks and experiment**
- * **Expressions of pleasure and enjoyment**
- * **Aspiration**



Quality of Outcomes - what emerged strongly right across the country was that community dance was about positive change or making a difference for the people engaging with it - individuals, groups and communities - change and progression for the participants as people, as dancers and as members of communities. It was also about change in the aesthetic frames of reference and about the development of the art form of dance.

In a recent article in *Animated*, the *Foundation's* quarterly magazine, Ruth Till the director of *Rubicon Dance* in Cardiff wrote, 'Our work has to be relevant to each person and each group and that means different methodologies for nearly every group' and, 'our leaders have to know how to work with a group, not what to do with them. They have to listen and respond to the group, to be absolutely aware, to be able to go with a plan or completely go with a whim, to know when to change, stop, go, challenge, praise, to manage groups with a concentration span of 30 seconds and they have to always give their very best to each group even if it is the sixth session of the day'.

Community dance is for me, as I believe it is for Ruth, about putting people at the centre of the dance so they can make real steps, honest and embodied steps, steps that take dance forward and steps that create the space for them to make giant leaps as human beings.

Ken Bartlett
Director, Foundation for Community Dance

community dance

- the benefits and beyond the benefits -

(As many readers will know, Janet Lunn is currently the Chairman of the Laban Guild's Community Dance Leaders' Training Courses Committee and has served on that Committee since its inception nearly 25 years ago. She has watched at close hand how community dance has developed and spread throughout the UK and across the world in that time.) Janet takes up the story:

It began for the Guild because Joan Russell, that inspired leader of recreative dance, saw the need to set up a group that would systematically offer training opportunities for the next generation of 'leaders', as opposed to teachers, of dance - a generation who had not experienced the inspirational guidance of Laban himself or, eventually, his colleagues and students. Dance Circles, Summer Schools, weekend courses and celebratory events like *Kaleidoscopia Viva* and the '79 Birthday Celebrations were dwindling but the demand for the experiences was still strong.

As teacher-training courses similarly ceased to exist and fewer children were enjoying exciting and appropriate dance experiences in school, this demand diminished, but the human need did not. Teachers felt their confidence undermined, especially when constantly encouraged to bring professional dancers into schools to train children in a range of dance styles from different cultures where there was little, if any, potential creative input from the children; there was less opportunity for them to dance together, solve movement problems for themselves or enjoy the satisfaction of contributing to the creative process - a vital part of human development so simply and effectively supplied by Laban based 'classes'.

Within a few years of the first *Leaders' Training Scheme* course (at Little Paxton) we began to see more and more teachers applying for the course as a substitute for impoverished initial training in colleges. Eventually we found the need to make very clear at the introductory and first weekend of the course that whilst we would be glad for teachers to gain ideas and teaching skills, this was designed as a community dance course, not an extended *Inset Course* and we had to give some course tutors advice on how to prevent the teachers from turning all the questions and tasks into child-based ones! Community dance has a lot in common with teaching obviously, but has a broader perspective and more potential advantages for a wider range of people and social situations.

In his editorial column in the last magazine, Gordon Curl quoted Ann Hutchinson-Guest's description of a community dance workshop led at this year's AGM where she remarked on 'the freedom to improvise and interlock with total strangers, the sense of trust (which) is undoubtedly a rewarding gift from Laban's work'.

On the training course, the first 3-week-end module, ('The Laban Fundamentals Module'), centres around *Body, Effort and Space*. We explain that there is a fourth fundamental: *Relationship*, which is intrinsic to all 10 weekends (in a similar way as *Flow* links the other 3 *Effort Elements of Weight, Space and Time*. I always think that it cannot be taught separately for it is the means by which all Laban's other ideas are experienced - the *sine qua non*, that makes Laban dance experiences, for many, different and more rewarding than other styles of dance training.

This can be an alarming introduction to the Laban perspective for those who come expecting to learn a 'Laban Technique' or the 'Laban Style'. For people who have attended regular classes since childhood, with a largely or wholly didactic, directed teaching style, the amount of structured improvisation and discovery through exploring movement themes with others can be uncomfortable in more challenging and intimidating than stimulating and rewarding! Yet the drop-off rate is negligible; people are quickly caught up and encouraged; connections quickly made and evaluation forms at the end of the first weekend are filled with adjectives like 'supportive, exhilarating, inspiring,

community dance (cont)

- the benefits and beyond the benefits -

exciting' as well as 'exhausting, challenging, unexpected'.

In recent years, more and more students applying for the course are long-term teachers of other dance styles; ballet, salsa, *exercise to music*, *street dance*, to name a few. Some of these leaders show great courage in facing what can feel like quite traumatic changes to their leadership style: sharing the creative process with others, observing and developing someone else's ideas, working without music or leaving sections of a lesson plan open and decision making to the participants. But as they see the quality of the dance they themselves and their students produce and the happy reactions of their students during their classes, they quickly come to relish the new skills and processes they are learning. With the conviction of converts in all areas of life, these students often find the introduction to this kind of community dance a revelation and claim that it transforms their life as well as their work. Tutors on the course love to read evaluations, not only of their own weekend's training but later evaluations in the student files, to witness the growth in students over the 2 years of the course.

We have been approached by some potential course buyers with requests to provide the course in a shortened, intensive form, over a week or a term but we have always resisted (even when this would have provided an opportunity to take the course abroad) because it is so clear to us that a huge part of the value of the course come from the relationships which form over the longer period and the opportunities this provides for the students to practise the skills and share experiences gained between weekends. The time period allows the profound experiences of Laban's ideas to be absorbed gradually with practical experience.



Photo by Pam Anderton

Anyone who subscribes to this Magazine will know the range of benefits ascribed to community dance. They are well documented in this and other publications, including *Animated*, the Magazine of the *Foundation for Community Dance* (until recently, edited by Cilla Dyke who bought in the first *Suffolk Dance Training Course* and has always been a staunch advocate of Laban's work and our training for Community Dance Leaders.) Reports to government bodies proliferate with demands for money to provide all the myriad of advantages to our society that community arts in general can bring: emotional and mental health improvements, development and maintenance of suppleness, stamina and co-ordination, mood enhancement, stress reduction, anger management and better communication skills. Increasingly, a recognition is growing of the empowering force of community arts, most especially movement and dance - of its capacity to break down emotional barriers to learning and communication by releasing the playful child that is capable of so much more new learning than its controlling adult.

We've known about these benefits in the Guild for decades and rejoiced at the thousands of community dance participants

whose lives have been enhanced by them. As a tutor, assessor and moderator of the CDLTC courses, however, my greatest delight is watching the growth, the filling out, the colouring in, of our trainee Dance Leaders themselves as they progress through the 10 weekends and final assessment of the course. Their growing self-confidence and ability to connect these new concepts and skills to their previous experience and knowledge, and thus enhance their teaching and choreography, is a wonder to behold as they discover new and effective problem-solving strategies for their work. We've witnessed inhibited, shy students who start out setting tasks with expressions like 'Perhaps you'd like to ...you might think about ...maybe you could sort of ...', transform into confident, innovatory leaders who have clear and high expectations and the means to persuasively challenge and demand quality. Many change physically as well; they walk taller and seem to open up as they blossom. Young people mature and older people are rejuvenated through the work and their relationships with each other. I love to watch new friendships and creative partnerships develop as they learn from each other and become independent. It's wonderful to watch their enthusiasm bubbling away, giving birth to new inspirations and the way they suddenly find, in the second half of the course, that everything around them from a profound spiritual thought to an empty crisp packet can be a stimulus to spark off a fresh choreographic idea with which to inspire others.

This is an energising and revitalising experience and when I re-visit a course 2 or 3 times over the 2 years, it's easy to see the transformations taking place. I've seen the terror in the eyes on weekend 5 when we explain that that at their next weekend they have to lead a group which could include strangers. I've had the conversations where students claim they can't face it, have no inspiration, haven't got the skills yet etc. Then I've been privileged to see the elation and delight when they sit down to their evaluation after leading their weekend 6 session, confidence brimming high, awash with relief and pride. One such student, on a course in Powys, had admitted to barely having the courage to leave home to come to the *Dance Centre* for her mid-course assessment. As she came over to the assessors at the end of excellent final assessment, a year later, she proclaimed, 'I don't care what you all thought of that - I can do this: I lead 30 children every week, I am a dance leader!' She has become a real asset to the *Powys Dance Agency* and her community in Wales.

Over the years, several *Dance Agencies* have bought in the course specifically to provide or extend a tutor/leader base for their area/County. The Guild enjoys symbiotic advantages by also gaining tutors for our courses and workshops, sources of advice and development ideas and authors for magazine articles to promote Laban's work; Michael Platt, Rhyon Parry and Petra Kuppers immediately spring to mind. Through this means too, active 'local pockets' of Laban treasure have grown up across the UK and the Republic of Ireland; in and around Ipswich, South Wales, Somerset, Belfast and Cork.

Wider benefits include a swelling of the Guild membership with Community Dance Leaders, demands for more advanced courses which extend knowledge of Laban theories and promote the spread of his ideas and prestige for the Guild and Laban's work with big organisations like the *Sports Council* and *The Foundation for Community Dance*. As all good teachers know, the wise teacher learns more from their pupils than they expect their pupils to learn from them. I suspect that the Guild and the leaders within it gain more benefits than many of the class participants they lead. In giving we receive, through guiding others our eyes are opened and after sowing small seeds we reap a plentiful harvest of benefits - but then I'll bet Rudolf Laban could have told me that 50 years ago!

Janet Lunn

aesthetic values in community dance

- *against a background of multiple values claimed for Community Dance, the Editor attempts to highlight the often under-acknowledged aesthetic values inherent in Community Dance* -

'... Interest in the idea of the modern community dancing seems to be widespread, for today I am able to look on your assembly of nearly a thousand people who have come here as representatives from our movement-choirs in more than sixty cities ...'

Rudolf Laban addressing a gathering in Germany 1936 (1)

One of the problems facing any writer on the topic of community dance must be the sheer breadth and scope of the concept itself; this is illustrated in the Report submitted by the *Foundation for Community Dance* to the *Department for Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee Enquiry into Dance* (2004). The Report affirms that:

'Community Dance practice and provision recognises an astonishingly broad diversity of dance styles and traditions: we identify 42 different forms in our Mapping research, including Ballet and contemporary dance, folk dance, African People's Dance, South Asian classical dance, popular social dance, as well as a range of 'national' dances ...the research provided hard evidence that community dance reaches people from the ages of three to ninety three, engages people of all abilities, and every cultural and economic background. ...4.78 million people participated in community dance activity ...' p.2/4 (2)

The Hegemony of Community Dance

Ken Bartlett, in his fascinating article in this Magazine, questions the concept of community dance and the extent of its practice by asking: 'Is every kind of dancing community dance?' and 'Are all communities doing community dance?' - to which he replies: 'a qualified yes!' If this is the case, then community dance (with some qualifications) must hold hegemony over the whole domain of dance - it spreads its tentacles over a vast territory of actual and potential terpsichorean space, encompassing a comprehensive 'community' of dance!

This embrace is comforting - if possessive - but it does create problems when, as Ken suggests, we do 'a little prodding and poking' by asking penetrating questions - questions of concept, fact and value. The concept of 'community dance', we find, for example, will not submit to any neat set of necessary and sufficient conditions - it is like Wittgenstein's 'games' which seem to have nothing common to all cases. So too with 'community dance': it appears to have nothing in common to all cases. Certainly, the concept of 'dance' itself is slippery enough, and the concept of 'community' is no less elusive - it has societal, geographical and ethnographical connotations - but the two terms in conjunction constitute a formidable concept; it encapsulates a host of applications and is called upon to do duty in a wide variety of contexts. It is conveniently made to fit, we are told, into a myriad of funding tick boxes (3), and is (and has been) vulnerable to politicisation; (instance the 10,000-strong movement choir in the Olympic Stadium Berlin in 1936 - when Laban fled!)

But let us not worry too much about its promiscuous title, for there is one eminent philosopher - Ludwig Wittgenstein, no less - who is at hand to help us elucidate the concept of 'community dance'. He would say (transposing from 'games' to the many kinds of community dance), "Don't say: 'There *must* be something common, or they would not be called (community dance) - but *look and see* whether there is anything common to all. - For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to all, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that. To repeat: don't think, but look! ... And the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail... I can think of no better expression" says Wittgenstein, than "to characterise these similarities (as) 'family resemblances' ...; (community dance) form(s) a family". (4)

What more homely, community-friendly description of the multiple manifestations of 'community dance' could there be than that they form a 'family'?



Photo by Pam Anderton

A Treasure-Trove of Values in Community Dance

Ken Bartlett and Janet Lunn would seem to have followed Wittgenstein's advice, for both have taken a good 'look' at community dance over the years and have found a treasure-trove of 'values', 'benefits', 'purposes' and 'qualities' - for which the 'family' of community dance must be justly proud!

Within the impressive list of benefits cited are: 'emotional and mental health - development and maintenance of suppleness - stamina and co-ordination - mood enhancement - stress reduction - anger management and better communication skills - breaking down of emotional barriers to learning and communication - growing self-confidence - rejuvenation - enthusiasm - energising and revitalising experience - 'elation and delight'; and at a more general level: - 'celebrating the human body' - 'equality of opportunity' - 'empowerment and human rights'. And yet others nominate 'the amelioration of social exclusion' - of 'reinvigorating pride in where people live' - 'social welfare' - 'relieving suffering or violence' and 'making the world a better place'. (5)

This remarkable accreditation for community dance would, on the face of it, seem to provide a panacea for all ills! But Ken cautiously believes that we should do a little 'prodding and poking' at these widespread claims by asking: 'Why are people so keen to involve members in community dance? Surely', he says. 'they can be empowered in other ways and could be members of all kinds of groups concerned with wholeness of their being'.

But in what other ways? Social Societies? Health Clubs? Sports Associations? Fitness Fraternities? Rambling Fellowships? Outdoor Pursuits? Occupational Guilds? What does community dance do, we might well ask, that distinguishes it from these other candidates? Surely, some carefully controlled research would determine whether or not community dance was *consistently* (rather than anecdotally) capable of achieving such benefits? Might it not be the case that if community dance leaders focussed their attention on promoting benefits such as 'stress reduction', 'anger management', or the alleviation of 'social exclusion' - then community dance would be transformed into 'psycho-therapy', 'emotional rehabilitation' or 'social engineering'? Would not its nature as an *aesthetic* pursuit, thereby, lose its integrity? But community dance leaders know only too well that aesthetic values are *intrinsic* to community dance - they are its *raison d'etre!* *Extrinsic* benefits (spin-offs of whatever kind) will *only* flow from community dance if it jealously guards its own aesthetic autonomy!

aesthetic values in community dance (cont)



Photo by Pam Anderton

Dance as 'activity' and dance as 'spectacle'

The distinction between dance as 'activity' and dance as 'spectacle' has long been recognised by historians and philosophers alike. Susanne Langer, for instance, states that:

'The most important effect of the passive audience on the history of dancing is, I think, the separation of dance as spectacle from dance as activity, and the consequent separate histories of these two distinct phases ...' p.201 *Feeling & Form* (6)

Undoubtedly, dance as 'activity' has a long impressive history - from primitive times to contemporary community dance - and as Curt Sachs in his *World History of Dance* reminds us:

'Whatever the nature of dance, whether it is a rhythmic release of energy or a deliberate religious act, it needs no onlooker, not even a single witness ...' (7) (my underlining)

Dance as 'activity' (?community dance), then, requires no spectators - a requirement which separates it from dance as 'spectacle'. Dance as 'spectacle', by definition, requires 'spectators' - a condition which in turn separates it from dance as 'activity'. But Curt Sachs elaborates:

'... in spite of its ecstatic and liturgical character, there early appears the germ of that great process of change which has gradually transformed the dance from an involuntary motor discharge, from a state of frenzied movement and a ceremonial rite, into a work of art conscious and intended for observation ...' p 218 (8) (my underlining)

And Susanne Langer would add:

'To make a work of art requires the translation of kinaesthetic experience into visual and audible elements ... dancers must transform the stage for the audience as well as themselves into an autonomous, complete virtual realm ...' p. 204 (9)

By contrast, no such demands are made upon community dancers: they are free to enjoy dance as 'activity' - with all its pleasures and aesthetic delights - and these are no less abundant in community dance than they are in concert/theatre dance; the difference lies (after Langer) in the dancer's pre-disposition and skill to transform aesthetic experiences into *presentable* visible form. Limitations in these respects, however, in no way disenfranchises the community dancer. Community dance is dance as 'activity', but it nevertheless carries within it the 'germ' which links it to the relatively late arrival of the great tradition of dance as *an art form* - a form which undoubtedly provides community dancers with inspiration, if not aspirations towards greater powers of *artistic* expression.

Dance theatre criticism, we know, systematically highlights the visible presence of aesthetic qualities in performance; but no such public criticism does this valuable service for community dance: aesthetic values remain largely unannounced (apart that is from

the ecstatic eulogies of participants). The consequent neglect of explicit aesthetic experiences would seem to place them off the map - and if off the map, then seldom visited! And yet community dance is rich in aesthetic qualities - for *the aesthetic is much wider than art*; it includes the participatory aesthetic delights of *natural movement* providing experiences unavailable to the passive spectator in the *grand circle*; the *aesthetic* credentials of community dance are, therefore, under-acknowledged and under-valued !

Aesthetic values and their description

So what then are these aesthetic values and qualities and how are they to be identified and described? Their language often seems wrapped in metaphor, analogy and figures of speech. Laban-trained community dance leaders, for example, regularly use the language of 'space, time, weight, flow and effort'; but in dance, strangely enough, these are not the simple elements they appear to be to the uninitiated; they are not exclusively, or even predominantly, the untransformed space, time, weight and efforts of ordinary reality; they are *perceived aesthetic qualities* to be discovered in the *virtual* realm of the dance. It requires a Mary Wigman, that eminent pupil of Rudolf Laban's, to remind us of this very fact when she says in her *Language of Dance* that *dance space*:

'... is not the tangible, limited, and limiting space of concrete reality, but the imaginary, irrational space of the danced dimension...' (*Language of Dance*(1966)p 12 (10)

and the same applies to 'time', 'weight' and 'flow', for in the context of the dance experience they are *perceived qualities* - *virtual* realities! When, for example, the critic describes the flight of the dancer as *'that special slow-motion grace, that soaring rise and floating descent which looks weightless ...'* we know that the alleged 'slow-motion', 'floating' and 'weightless(ness)' are not physical facts: dancers are not weightless, they cannot float and they do not move in slow motion - in reality! These are paradigm cases of *aesthetic qualities* - their looks, their appearances; they are *aesthetic aspects* - perceived and conceived as such!



Involvement In the Movement Choir

Let us look at a more modest example from community dance - where no audience is either required or expected -the 'movement choir'. It exists for its *own sake* and is rich in aesthetic delights -even if relatively unskilled. Such 'activity' - the staple diet of many Laban Community Dance Courses - is not circumscribed or constrained by proscenium arches, concert-hall conventions, or the elaborate accoutrement of stage-lighting and decor; it has its being in many and varied places from school and college halls to high security prisons, convalescent homes, country house lawns, state-rooms and wide oak-panelled staircases (we recall

aesthetic values in community dance (cont)

a 300-strong movement choir sweeping down the staircase at an Ashridge stately mansion). It is in such places, *in the absence of an audience*, that the participants experience a wealth of aesthetic qualities. Warren Lamb affirms this view when he states:

'It is a 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.' p 12 Vol 23 No 1 (11)



Photo by Pam Anderton

Now dancers in the movement choir, as like as not, are enveloped on all sides in a kaleidoscope of fellow dancers; they may be fast-moving, slow-stepping, leaping, landing, swirling, wheeling, turning, confronting, propelling, coiling, falling, crawling, slowly rising, advancing, lifting aloft compatriots or merging and meeting in a moment of hand-raising finale! The dancers are simultaneously performers and spectators; whilst moving themselves, their eyes have a feast of changing forms, limbs, torsos, colours, textures and light; and there is sound - whether footfalls, vocalisings, percussion or orchestral accompaniments - each with its own aesthetic qualities; there are moments of tactile delicacy, hard impact, grapplings and supported leanings, sweeping convergences and partings; participants are experiencing the sensations and aesthetic perceptions of being ingredient *en masse* in a melée of mutual involvement. They fulfil all the 'qualities of engagement' outlined by Ken Bartlett in his article: 'So what is community dance?'

But there are also *specific and discriminable aesthetic qualities* which are discovered by the dancer and highlighted by the leader, they include:

spatial qualities - *the line of a leap, the shape of a fall, complexes of steps and turns, the converging, interlacing and dispersing of dancers, the pattern and design of a slow moving sequence;*

temporal qualities of *swiftness, briskness, urgency, hiatus, rhythmic repetition - the leisurely look of long strides, the momentary still of a choral climax;*

sensory qualities - *the smoothness of transitions, abrupt encounters, the fluency of a gesture, the crispness of a finger flick, the secureness of a deep landing, the sweetness of a well-timed meeting;*

intensity qualities - *perceived vitality, explosive interactions, dynamic expansions and contractions, controlled violence - the tightly-clinched improvised contest, the tense crouched circle, the startling gestural cry - all in contrast to sparkling and nimble footwork and evanescent mobility;*

complexity qualities of *intricacy, deviousness, subtlety - the deftness of a side-step, the finesse of a duo, the total configuration of the movement choir;*

expressive qualities of *perceived confidence, boldness, severity, anguish, flamboyance and nonchalance, agony and despair;*

dramatic qualities of *danced terror, triumph, submission, catastrophe, serenity and the stately processional of a ritual.*

Edwin Denby (that doyen of dance criticism) writes of professional dancers:

'...To watch their lightness and harmonious ease, their clarity and boldness of motion, is a pleasure. ...their elastic tautness, their openness of gesture, their gaiety of leaping, beating and whirling, their slow soaring flights. Your senses enjoy directly how they come forward and closer to you, or recede upstage, turning smaller and more fragile ... how they approach one another and draw apart, how they pass close without touching or entwine their bodies in stars of legs and arms...' (12) and these qualities and many more are variously available in community dance.

Imagination In the aesthetic experience of dance

Appreciation of aesthetic qualities does not, of course, exhaust the fullness of experience for the participant, for with imagination community dancers can empathise - identify not only with their fellow dancers but with an absorbing dance stimulus - be it myth, legend, romance, poetry or dramatic events! In and through the dancer's imaginatively-charged perceptions they experience an extended sphere of influence - far beyond their normal capacities; and this becomes even more amplified when one dancer's sphere of influence conjoins with another's - with the movement choir as a whole. The dance space becomes alive with interacting forces, space tensions, powers far greater than those physically present; they invade the experience of the dancer; dancers enter into the imaginative theme of a work *from within* - feel themselves inwardly articulating great dramatic and vivid emotional moments and are implicated in their triumphs and *denouements*.

Coda

Having taken to heart Ken Bartlett's hint that we should 'prod and poke' at the many claims made for community dance, we might in turn feel obliged to play the devil's advocate with the 'aesthetic' and 'imaginative modes of experience' we have outlined. Do they stand up to critical scrutiny? Are they not too esoteric? Too nebulous? Too remote from ordinary reality? Community dance 'for its own sake' must seem irresponsibly irrelevant to the needs of contemporary life! But is it? Is it not the case that community dance carries within itself *inherent* powers to transform, ameliorate and enhance the human condition?

But deny community dance its autonomy as an aesthetic pursuit, and its instrumental values evaporate like dry ice!

Notes and References:

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Gordon Curl

the olimpias: community dance and performance technologies

(Petra Koppers is well-known to members of the Gull; she is at present Assistant Professor of Performance Studies in the English and Cultural Studies Department Bryant University Rhode Island USA. Her article illustrates the extent to which community arts can integrate literature, dramatic themes, audio-visual displays, technology, music and dance - with disability artists who are prepared to communicate their experiences to an audience.)

The *Olimpias* is a Performance Research Project Series, and this means that under its banner artists come together to explore issues of collaboration, (new) media, community arts and identity politics in residencies or long-term projects. One such collaborative event occurred in May 2003 in Liverpool, when Jo Gell from the *SMARTiab* at Central St. Martins, UK and Clilly Castiglia and Kevin Feeley from the *Center for Advanced Technology*, NYU, US, had asked me to work with their new performance technologies in a community arts setting. We worked with five interested disabled artists associated with the *Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts* and *North West Disability Arts Forum*. Together, we explored how contemporary performance software/hardware solutions could interact with disability arts approaches of empowerment, communication and access. The resulting show, *Sirens*, emerged out of a fast and furious working period, and its guerilla performance as research-process is the topic of this short article.

Many of The *Olimpias* themes emerge out of site-specific concerns - in previous years, *Olimpias* performances have worked with Welsh myths in order to articulate mental health difference (Earth Stories, Sleeping Giants), or with echoes between New England beaches and our fantasies of our bodies as sites (Body Provisional A see www.olimpias.net for more information). In Liverpool, an extremely short work period meant that instead of a lengthy research of locations and their stories and fantasies, we had to quickly find a unifying theme. We found this core in the myth of the *sirens*. Much of Greek myth uses different bodies as markers of extraordinary natures. *Oedipus* is already limping before he is blinded, marking his status as traveller between two worlds, two kingdoms. *Hepaisthos*, the God of the smithy who created *Pandora*, the perfect woman, also limps: within the economy of the story, supposed perfection rises out of supposed imperfection. *Tiresias* is blind: the blind seer was punished by the Gods for knowing too much, as he had lived both in a female and a male body, and knew both pleasures. In these stories, disability is a mark of knowing too much too fast, experiencing *hubris*, and undergoing change - all attribute often associated with new technologies, as well. Our bodies on the workshop stage echoed these mythologised impairments (blindness, a limp, pain, deafness etc.), but as disabled people, we tend to experience these bodily differences not as something 'unnatural', but as our own, familiar, central identity. This split between disability as metaphor and disability as lived experience is an important feature of much current work in disability arts and theory. This sense of disability as a form of valuable access to the world in its own right, and as a dance language, became the core political centre of the show. In our work with the *Sirens*, we inverted the usual perspective. Instead of *Orpheus* or the *Argonauts* telling of bird-bodied women who lure sailors to their death, we focused on the story and lives of the *Sirens* themselves: what do they see, what do they hear, what is their song? During the workshop, we wrote responses to questions such as 'Why do the *Sirens* sing?' And 'What does the *Siren* see/hear/feel?' This inversion of perspective and focus on sensory experience became the guiding metaphor for the workshop improvisations. We improvised around different ways of moving, taking our own bodies and their specifics as the starting points: moving from the skin, from the bones, and from blood (all of these instructions result in different movement qualities), and then connecting these movement qualities up to wind, rock and sea. We then developed our dance instructions from a number of postcards I had brought along: showing a threshold, a shore,

a dolphin, rocks, and the statue of a watergod. As we developed the choreography, the dance focused on connection, and spatial familiarity - duets explored connecting points between bodies, and on the play of different energies in these connections, using some of the energy suggestions from the postcards, and from the writing material we had worked on in response to the *Sirens* questions.



In the dance choreography and the technological play with dance, connections and distances, attraction and repulsion, provided anchor points for travel phrases. Visual technologies became a key player in this: play with perspective, for instance, allowed videographer and dancers to interact in different ways, using close-ups and changing distances. One of our videographers, Max, has a mobility impairment that meant not only discomfort on the stage, but also the need to be flexible with time arrangements. Traditional performance arrangements would have had problems with these access needs but our use of a more diverse theatre machine allowed Max to be a fully integrated artistic voice. We used the software *Viewhear*, which functions like a keyboard - videos, sounds, etc. can be fed into it, and can then be 'improvised' into an audiovisual score during a live performance. Video material, sound clips and still images can 'slide' into the show with controls similar to a lighting set (i.e., the slides you run up or down to coax light up on the stage). Thus, we were able to feed Max's dance video material, worked on in short but intense moments, into the software. And even though Max was not able to join us for the last performance due to health reasons, his contribution was present: we 'mixed it' into the final performance as a video projection. During the workshop and performance, we paid particular attention to the relative power and status of different live, technological and embodied/technological methodologies and their interplay. Important technologies we began to work with were audio-transcription and captioning. Two of the performers were visually impaired, and two identified as Deaf. This allowed for many interesting moments of improvisation - the vibration of the wooden floor and a reliance on kinesthesia as information source were some of the techniques we explored. In one moment, a Deaf artist, Ruth Gould, gave an audio-transcription of a dance between two other performers, and a camera captured in close-up her moving mouth. In a movement/view/hear montage, these different performance moments could now interplay, their status as 'aesthetic object' or 'information system' undecidable and problematised, as both, the live dance and the videoed mouth, were equally important partners in the whole experience. Beyond the 'presence' of live dance, mouthdance on screen, dance-close-up on screen, amplified voice, and sign language interpreter on stage, access was provided visually at multiple points (as the text on the screen was legible), and audible transcription could be provided to the whole auditorium or just to individual viewers through a loop system, independent of their impairment status. Captioning also functioned in a complex

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way. *Text Rain* was another software solution brought by the NYU team. We fed various pieces of creative writing created by workshop participants in response to the *Sirens* questions into the programme, and mounted a sensor to capture movement on stage. The resulting material shows text scrolling down on the projecting screen. Where moving bodies are captured by the sensors, the text-color changes. The text seems to flow around the bodies, it moves with them. Image and presence merge and divert in interesting ways in this circus of movement, script and input devices. Disability as a socially assumed lack vanishes, and the body/technology stage instead bodies forth a richness, the pleasure of difference in collaboration. No one's access is (only) privileged (although the visual remains the potentially strongest draw - our common theatre machine and its audience seems to require more training to the seduction of sound). *Sirens* emerged as a cauldron of experiments. The purely spectacular, objectifying the performers and disembodied the technology, is one of the dangers encountered by the work. But the stage presence of the performers seem to hinder their vanishing behind the multi-media light show: they were very present, very focused, and remained the core of the performance. Here is what one of our technicians, Kevin Feeley wrote about the performance in his independent study report for NYU: 'The performance was intense but went amazingly well. Considering that these people had only met and begun working 56 hours prior, the *Sirens* was a huge success - the technology genuinely provided a rich, multi-modal supplement to the movements of the artists on the stage'. All audio cues had to have an accompanying visual or kinesthetic cue; and all video cues had accompanying audio cues, etc. The performance had a signer on stage, and text was used whenever possible to describe audio assets or captions for movement. The performance was so well received, that the audience requested a question and answer session immediately after.

The performance was the opening evening of the *Effecting Change: the Future of Disability Arts* conference at LIPA, and thus the audience was filled with fellow disabled people. As Kevin describes, once the performance ended, the audience wouldn't let us get off stage: in a world where access issues often play second fiddle to aesthetics, it was very refreshing for many to see a dance performance that deliberately plays with the call and response of video, audio, and human bodies. The show relied on collaboration: the technologist-artists went with the flow, improvised just as much as the dancers did, and the audience was happy to engage with the resulting experiment. To me, it was very exciting to see where we can take things, how far improvisation can flow, and how generous performers and audiences can be with one another. Video and audio technologies were here not used to 'supplant' the dancing body, but to engage with it, partner it. I learned that new dance technologies can play important and fun roles in the future of community dance performances.

P.S. Having researched the *Sirens* for Liverpool, I am still haunted by them, and a different kind of *Sirens* performance will take place in Rhode Island, on a beach, in September 2004. We will have sand, water, rocks, wood, food, voices and bodies. The only other technology in sight and earshot will be a CD player. Our main access technologies will be proximity and kinesthesia, and the pleasure of a communal picnic - in these close quarters, we hope to communicate just as openly, and accessible to everyone present.

Sources: Kevin's report on his Independent Study is on-line, and gives an interesting insight into a technologist's vision of access technologies.

Petra Koppers



view from america

I have just returned from the biennial conference of the *Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies* at Long Beach, California. It was a pleasure to have a conference close to my American home instead of the customary long flight. Some people did have long flights, from Germany and Sweden for example, but I could not find anyone from U.K. among the 80 or so participants.

The theme of the Conference was advertised as "Building Bridges" and "Strengthening Bonds". On the first morning, however, one well known head of a College Dance Department exploded that *LIMS* had been preaching these themes for years but nothing ever changed. The implication was that *LIMB* itself was not doing anything to promote change and was, itself, provoking tensions.

Will there ever be prospect of harmony between all the various Laban institutions in the world? - or even between U.S. and U.K. ? - or even just within the U.S. itself? Is it even desirable?

Mindful of my own split from former colleagues in *Action Profiling* I am sympathetic to other organisations from which there have been splits, as has been the case with *LIMB* itself. Indeed, almost every growing organisation has splits or breakaways at some point and they often have positive results. Whether they are for the right reasons (professionalism, theoretical principles, broadening scope) or wrong ones (monopolistic power, exclusive domination, personal feuding) will always require definition and remain subjective. The problem with "bridge building" is that the parties from each side want the bridge to be built from where the other party stands, to where they on their side want to go, and according to their terms.

As a member of the panel on Marketing I ventured the suggestion that competitiveness was a good thing if pursued honestly and openly. Bridges become impossible to build when you stick exclusively to your own side, trumpet your own superiority, and expect people to come to you. Talented and enterprising people break away to do their own thing. Mostly this is good. It still usually works out to be a good thing in the end even if the parties who split are, within limits, political, devious, and self interested in their tactics. My favourite proclamation is that, so long as the product or service has potential, which is most certainly the case in the Laban field, that competition opens up the overall market and that is good for everyone.

At the end of the Conference it seemed to me that *LIMB* is having some success in building bridges, after all. As an Institute they have trained more people more fully in Laban theory and practice than any other Centre. Many graduates are successfully applying *Laban Movement Analysis* in a range of fields and making known their Laban heritage. A Laban Conference deriving from such a background can establish the environment for building bridges and strengthening bonds. Pity no-one from U.K. was present (except for half of my Anglo-American self)!

Warren Lamb

laban guild community dance

(Ann Ward the Guild Courses Officer outlines the Guild's involvement in Community Dance Courses)

As the *Laban Guild* has always believed that everyone should have the right and opportunity to dance, we have devoted a lot of our efforts to establishing a suitable training for would-be Community Dance Teachers.

Our courses do not depend on teaching particular techniques, but through the medium of creative dance in contemporary style, they provide training in, and understanding of, Laban's Principles of Movement. These can then be applied to any particular genre or, of course, other disciplines such as Drama or Art, Movement Therapy or Personal Development. Laban-based work enables our teachers to put class members and their concerns at the heart of their classes, while still encouraging the development of skills in dance and dance-making - the central characteristics of community dance identified by the *Foundation for Community Dance* in their recent Report.



Powys course members

The courses are now approaching their 25th anniversary. They were originally conceived as filling a gap left by the reduction of hours on Teacher Training Courses but, since then, have greatly increased their scope and content. Nowadays we have to address issues such as *Health and Safety, Child Protection, Risk Assessment* et al, but the 10 weekend course still manages to be mainly practical - how else can you teach Laban's Principles and experience community dance, backed by assignments, recorded re-actions and reflections, and modules on Leadership, Marketing and Safe Classes?

Our *Stage 1 Community Dance Teachers Courses* are unique in that they take the courses to the participants. Any agency can buy in our course or, if the Guild feels it has sufficient support in the area, we can organise courses ourselves. The advantage to the host agency is that they then gain a pool of highly qualified teachers to work in their area. The advantage to participants is that the host agency may be able to draw down grants to support the course. As the Guild receives no direct public funding, all our courses have to be financially viable. Even so, this highly regarded qualification, accepted by the *Open College Network*, offers extremely good value for money - thanks largely to the amount of voluntary work behind the scenes.

Courses in England have historically been mainly in the South; eg. Somerset, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Essex, Suffolk - with a foray into Nottinghamshire. We would like to expand into the North of England and Scotland, where considerable interest has been shown. We have also run several successful courses for Powys dance in Wales. What is noticeable is that where agencies have run several courses and extended to a *Stage 2*, for example Powys and Suffolk, they have built up a really strong infrastructure of community dance teachers.

A particularly successful area has been Ireland, both North and South, with integrated courses in all regions. A strong background in educational dance had long been established by Musgrave Davidson in the North and Sheelagh Hickey in the South, together with Laban-based dance in performance long established by Helen Lewis, Cathy OKennedy and others. It is very rewarding to see that applications for courses are frequently supported by previous graduates.

But we don't rest on our laurels! Every course is evaluated and amendments made accordingly. Even more importantly, the Training Committee has been seeking to develop a coherent programme of progression for those participating in, and teaching, creative dance using Laban's principles. So graduates of our *Stage 1 Course* can progress to our *Stage 2 Course*, with an emphasis on technique and choreography, and can deliver our *Foundation Course* (30 hours) and our new schemes of work for children. These four schemes, related to the targets outlined in the UK *National Curriculum*, are suitable for delivery to children from pre 5 up to 15 years. The final scheme leads in to the *Foundation Course*, though this can be used with many different client groups.

Our tutors are supported with information on insurance and regular up-dates on current issues, while our quarterly magazine keeps them abreast of developments this and other fields.

Our current committee comprises Janet Lunn, Sheila McGivering, Gill Hibbs, Ann Ward, Sue Grover, with Michael Platt as consultant. If you would like to get involved, or would like more information, please contact Ann Ward, Courses Officer for the Laban Guild, 7 Coates Close, Heybridge, Maldon, Essex, CM9 4PB email: awardglenkeen@bigfoot.

Ann Ward

laban guild projects fund

The Guild Council's Executive Committee has approved the establishment of a

Project Fund

to encourage outstanding initiatives in accordance with the Guild's Constitutional aims and objectives - whether in the fields of performances, publications or research.

Members and friends are invited to help launch this fund with donations (no matter how small)

to the Editor.

icosahedra and all that

(Valerie Preston-Dunlop responds, by invitation, to Jim Schofield's article 'Dance in the Park' - published in our last Magazine)

The problem with Jim's article is that it is not really what he says it is, namely, 'grounded in concrete experience of Laban's spatial ideas and notation'. Instead it is grounded in an imaginative use of polyhedra as an all weather space. It seems a fun idea to have open-air polyhedra with improvising dancers inside. Quite how the notation fits in remains to be seen. Jim's discussion could do with more 'grounding' for it to avoid representing Laban's concepts and the arts of choreography and notating in what could be read as a trivial level.

The strength of Laban's own ideas is that they are multi-layered and have both a historical and anthropological dimension. His choreutic heritage is capable of being revisited again and again and that appears to be a strength when the revisitation is undertaken by artists of the calibre of William Forsythe or Trisha Brown who bring to it a cultural and aesthetic perspective. There is nothing amiss in placing a transparent dance space in the grounds of Bretton Hall. It could well prove enjoyable to move in and to watch. Why I ask myself bring Laban into it just because it is a polyhedral shape? There are plenty of other buildings that are polyhedral without referring to Laban. Putting direction signs at 'points' on the inner surface as instructions to move creatively is a possible idea if some what limiting to invention. Dancers turn round when they move, they face different fronts, so how do static direction indications really help? Jim has the right idea, in my view, when he writes that primarily 'the space will be inspirational' or fun. What the purpose of writing the movements down in notation 'as they are created' would be is unclear. Notation is not really a jotting matter but a serious analytic process. Is that what Jim envisages the public watching? Or the dancing?

Perhaps we could remind ourselves what Laban saw as the connection between polyhedral models and human movement. The five platonic solids were identified as their name suggests by Plato not Laban. The 26 directions around a centre are common knowledge in elementary mathematics. So he did not provide either of those concepts. What he did was allocate graphic symbols to directions having made the gigantic conceptual leap of seeing movement as living architecture rather than step patterns or arm positions. That leap is far more significant than the symbols. What a direction sign represents can confuse. The problem has been thoroughly gone over in the notation research debates (see the *Archives of ICKL*). The sign may indicate the direction of motion (or vector) or record a position in relation to a datum point or identify a location in the environment, all dependent on establishing which cross of axes you are using as an orienting matrix. Are you regarding vertical as sky to floor or as head to tail? It makes a difference. And where is your front? Where are you facing *vis-a-vis* the location of the direction sign? Could one choose any polyhedra and connect it to Laban? He chose a polyhedron for the design of his theatre in 1903, not for fun or arbitrarily but because it enabled him to create a theatre space for dance that fulfilled his strongly egalitarian views on society and his view that theatre should be available equally to the rich and the poor. Hence, no privileged and expensive seats and a circular space that gave every ticket holder an equally good view of the performance. Why did he not believe that the octahedron was the scaffold congruent for all human movement? After all it embodies the six fundamental named directions that everyone uses and dancers of ballet vocabulary use it as their basic orientation. But the movement that an octahedron encapsulates is idealized and restricted. It is a mode of spatial use with no lability. That kind of restriction was not a suitable model for the burgeoning movement arts of the emancipation of a 20th century post-Nietzschean society, was Laban's view. Nor was it a model of the reality of human behaviour patterns and the human skeletal form. The cube clearly was not either. In ballet the cube is the model of each dancer's environment, the walls and corners of each 'dancer's square'. The patterns he observed in movement (in his research with Mary Wigman in Ascona in

1914) were not all peripheral patterns as is ballet, neither were they vertical and horizontal in the main but inclined and curved in their motion creating complex 3D pathways. He saw that in reality the dodecahedron was the nearest model for a mover's actual orientation (see the dodecahedral drawings in the *Laban Archive* and the *Laban Collection*) and he would have liked to have been able to educate dancers to see choreutics through that scaffold. But a dodecahedron is very difficult to perceive and imagine and communicate. It is too complex. So he simplified his analysis to identify with the less complex icosahedron by imploding each of the dodecahedron is twelve pentagons to their centre, while knowing that each 'point' so identified had in reality several surrounding variants according to the pathway and purpose of the move.

He went on with Mary Wigman to enlarge these behavioural pathways into his first scales and gradually into all manner of rings or choreutic rows. (He knew the concept of tone rows that composer Arnold Schoenberg was developing in Vienna simultaneously with his own choreutic row work in Ascona). He did not say to himself 'lets use an icosahedron and fit the dancer neatly into it'. His view was that that was how the human being and the free dancer used space naturally.

Polyhedral orientation of movement forms has a history and a religious ritual significance too which Laban taught in his dance history classes. Tetrahedral forms, he showed, could be found in ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs of ritual performance. The planes of movement have been and still are used today in the rituals of blessing and supplication, adoration and solemnity. (Laban's duo for men *Ekstatische Zweimäsonnertanz* uses both these ideas plus the circular whirling of the Dervish dancers).

I notice in Jim's illustration that his alternative polyhedral models have an ambiguous relationship with the body. Some of his polyhedra stand on a point. They then cease to be a form congruent with the laterally symmetric human body and presumably become playful environments. But the use of polyhedra as models for movement have more than a play purpose for Laban and Jim Schofield seems to forget that.

To discuss it a little further, Laban took the centre of his body as the place from which all energy and emotion and orientation emanated, as he has clearly stated in his writings. In the choreutic material that he used in his training method and in his choreographic vocabulary the center of the form is in unison with the center of his body. That mode of being epitomized expressionist dance based as it was on authentic human feeling coming out from within. The movement came from the heart and the soul. That idea is reiterated in Martha Graham's vocabulary but with a significant change: the centre is lowered. Why lowered? Arbitrarily? No, because for her the centre of her creative force was not her soul or her heart but her sexual drive. The groin, the pelvis became the centre of her kinesphere from where the expressivity of her contraction and release material emanated.

Lincoln Kirstein (in *The Classic Ballet*) shows his reader how ballet has two platonic forms one inside the other as its orientation, with the cube outside the dancer fixed in relation to the audience and the octahedron turning with the dancer. This combination brings about style, through *epaulement, croisé, effacé* and *en face* alignment. Why was that orientation chosen? It embodies a historical cultural state when the dancer danced to please the privileged audience and give the audience the best view of their beautiful poses. The fixed cube is oriented to the privileged sponsors. Why do I bring this in here? Because spatial orientation and kinesphere models have always produced style and embodied concepts and social preferences and value systems. So what value systems do Jim's polyhedra embody, I ask myself, beyond imaginative fun? And if that is the case (and why not?) perhaps bringing in Laban to whom these things did have significant value is debatable.

Valerie Preston-Dunlop

questions for the experts

(The Editor questions Michael Platt BEd(Hons) MA, on his career as a dancer, choreographer, Community Dance Leader, Director of Suffolk Youth Theatre and his views on Laban's contribution to these.

Michael Platt is well known in dance communities - not only for his large-scale Dance Productions, inspired teaching on Community Dance Courses, NDTA Conferences and Inset Courses at home and abroad, but also for his direction of some of the most *avante garde* and outstanding drama productions in the UK - productions which fuse dance, music and drama to an acknowledged professional standard of performance. He is currently *Advisory Teacher for Dance for Suffolk County Council* and Director of the *Suffolk Youth Theatre*. Michael is also known for his writings in this Magazine, in *Dance Matters* and *Animated*. What is perhaps less well-known, is his academic prowess, having gained a first class honours BEd and distinction MA in English and Drama. It is small wonder that his practical dance and drama work are so deeply underpinned by his literary knowledge and skills. Michael undertook a post-graduate Certificate at *Bretton Hall College of Music Art and Drama* and has continued his professional development with *Guild Community Dance, Random Dance, Laban for Actors* and *DVB Courses*).

Q1. Bearing in mind that your own training was primarily in English and Drama, what led you to become so dedicated to movement and dance?

When I began my career as a teacher of drama in Suffolk in 1987 I was fortunate to meet and work with an inspirational teacher and mentor: Scilla Dyke. In her role as the *Advisory Teacher for Dance for Suffolk County Council* Scilla offered a range of dynamic and stimulating training courses for people like me to whom dance was a new, unknown and rather frightening area of experience. I loved it and wanted more! Again, under Scilla's encouragement, I joined the *County Youth Dance Company 'Splinters'* directed by Caroline Mummer, where I discovered a new art form fusing creativity, expression and rigorous training. This weekly opportunity to dance, improvise, create and perform with others, was personally invigorating (physically and imaginatively) and socially liberating.

Meanwhile, back in school as a new drama teacher, I found my new-found passion for dance was powerfully influencing and shaping my work with young people. I had been awakened to the importance of the body; I became fascinated with ways to nurture in my students a kinaesthetic awareness and body confidence - a being 'at home' in their bodies both individually and in relation to others - and the ability to express and communicate their ideas and feelings through gesture and movement. As my dance experience outside school increased so my confidence to experiment and taking risks with these students developed. The results were - and still are - tangible and overwhelming in their power. Dance educates people; it sensitises and ignites us - it has the capacity to connect our intellectual and physical dimensions through a current of imagination and lets us fly.

And then I discovered Laban! The Guild's *Leaders in the Community* training course was beginning in Ipswich and I signed up - completely unaware of what it was all about. Under the wisdom of Sam and Suzi Thornton, Anna Carlisle, Maggie Semple and Janet Lunn I discovered an ethos of dance and movement, which I could inhabit. The course not only gave me an opportunity to dance, it also helped me to develop an underpinning philosophy and structure, which began to clarify, and unravel some of the intense sensations I experienced in and through dance. It gave me a language of words and movement through which I could articulate my ideas and thereby informed my ability to teach creatively and foster creativity in the responses of my students.

Q2. How would you make the distinction between movement appropriate to dance and movement appropriate to drama?

In my approach I see no distinctions in the initial stages of a project. I always begin from a movement base whether the focus

is drama or dance. I use a combination of movement games, physical warm ups, creative improvisations and technique exercises to address Laban Fundamentals of Body, Space, Dynamics and Relationships. I do this for the following reasons: - to discover the nature of the group - the individuals' and the chemistry between them - where we need to go to create a harmonious, trusting, and cohesive group to develop each individual's awareness of themselves as a unique body operating in space. The Fundamentals establish a sense of self within a team at the beginning of each session and requires each person to inhabit their body and take individual responsibility.

They develop a sense of community and shared responsibility within an ensemble by promoting interrelationships, spatial awareness, peripheral awareness and sensitivity. In my work the sense of group identity is fostered through movement. This is the movement training essential in all my work as a foundation and it will be ongoing - regardless of the drama or dance nature of the work. The difference arises in a dance context when the movement training will develop into a rigorous technical training because the body will be the key means of communication and must be able to be articulated in order to express. The movement and the dancers are the key focus so the movement experience becomes more refined, more acute. In a drama context the movement experience must be matched by a corresponding vocal and musical experience, development of character and understanding of text, plot, genre, style. But my approach is to develop understanding of these aspects - vocal, textual, character - through the movement experience, movement observation and exploration. This is not to say the technical demands are any less in drama than dance.

In drama contexts I work deeply and thoroughly on Laban's Movement Fundamentals throughout rehearsals - the actors must inhabit their bodies, must be orientated in space, be able to draw on a range of dynamics and an ability to work intuitively with others. These Fundamentals are the on-going training, offering each actor and the company a huge palette of choices - a range of possibilities - on which to draw. They offer the development of an ability to express and communicate from an informed body and mind. This movement training also fosters the link between an intellectual understanding of text/character and its vocal manifestation and an ability to physically inhabit the world of the drama and the space of the theatre.

As a director and choreographer crafting work for performance I see no distinction in my approach, whether I am directing a play or choreographing a dance. The organisation and placement of bodies in space to communicate an intention is always of paramount importance. The space as an architectural arena, inhabited by light and bodies really excites me. On reflection I realise that I choreograph a drama just as intensively as I choreograph a dance.

Q3 Do you think that the experience of aesthetic qualities 'for their own sake' constitutes an adequate justification for community dance?

Within the movement experience of a community dance session it is impossible not to experience aesthetic qualities of line, shape, pattern etc - these qualities are the foundations of our dance, the vocabulary we use, the 'alphabet'. We use these qualities to construct and choreograph dances that express artistic intention in the same way as we construct words into sentences to communicate meaning.

One of the responsibilities of community dance should be to educate dancers into an awareness of the power of aesthetic qualities so they are not used purely instinctively - without consideration - but from an informed standpoint whereby we can craft and select the appropriate aesthetic qualities which will enable us to articulate our movement ideas with clarity and impact. Sometimes the teaching of aesthetic qualities is submerged in the exciting energy of creating in response to a stimulus - of expressing, composing and improvising and being

questions for the experts

'in the moment' of movement. This is an aspect of community dance, which is personal, social, creative and magical - but it is not all there should be. As movement practitioners we have a duty to learn and teach the fundamental structures, which underpin our practice. I feel there must be a balance between the experiential movement 'being in the moment' and of stepping back to analyse, to reflect and to develop an understanding of the importance of aesthetic qualities. I find *The Art of Making Dances* by Doris Humphrey is a very useful starting point for this reflective analysis of the power of aesthetic qualities to communicate intention. Agree or disagree with the author's strident comments on the rights and wrongs of dance making, the book provokes a reaction and an internal dialogue, a dynamic debate about one's own choreographic, movement and spatial preferences.

I mentioned the word balance - I think this is the key: that we experience aesthetic qualities and understand their significance - but that this is embedded within a context e.g. the exploration of a stimulus so that there is a clear intention to the application of aesthetic qualities. I think we should promote a willingness to pause in our movement explorations - to stand back - to analyse how we can use aesthetic qualities to express and communicate our ideas.

Q4. What are the problems of choosing images which are too clear and concrete for dance interpretation?

Considering this question I reflected on those stimuli that have been particularly fruitful for me as a teacher and choreographer and also as a dancer. These are the stimuli which are like icebergs - the small percentage of which float above the surface of the water - this is the image or words which first jump out at you and awakens your interest and alerts your attention to the possibility of a starting point for dance. And then you dive deeper and discover the mass of the submerged ice below the surface - the enormous possibilities the stimulus has to offer. A dancer with a stimulus is like an archaeologist - we see the clue above ground and then begin to excavate, digging deeper. The most useful stimuli are those which lead to a labyrinth of possibilities and connect with other tunnels. Connections are important. They lead you back up to the surface to discover new images which act like signposts and send you scurrying down again to explore and uncover .

There are times when you think you have found a good stimulus and excitedly pursue it only to discover it just goes in one direction and then stops. This is the image or text which is too literal. Try as you might you can't take it anywhere else and the exploration becomes forced. When this happens I try a different approach and attempt to explore the image from a completely different route, often bringing in completely oppositional images or complementary ones that may spark off connections or contrasts and so move me away from a literal interpretation. If the image is too literal it means that you and the class have to work harder to explore its potential - or sometimes you must face reality and simply acknowledge that this particular stimulus is not the rich source you originally believed and move on to other sources!



Photo by Mike Kwasniak

michael platt's brechtian masterpiece

Wolsey Theatre Ipswich May 2004

Bertolt Brecht - playwright, opera librettist, choreographer (and contemporary of Rudolf Laban - both of whom fled the Nazis), would undoubtedly have been elated to have witnessed *Suffolk Youth Theatre's* production of *The Good Person of Sichuan* performed in the *Wolsey Theatre* Ipswich in May of this year. It was a *tour de force* - a remarkable fusion of movement, dance, acting, mime, choral speech, singing, chanting, guitar strumming and specially written musical accompaniment by Pat Whymark.

Susanne Langer, that eminent philosopher of the arts, once declared that '... there are no happy marriages in the arts ...', but this production must surely have belied such a decree - for there could be fewer happier marriages than we witnessed in this sparkling *melée* of the arts!

Brecht was undeniably influenced by *Chinese Theatre* with its synthesis of songs, movement virtuosity, vivid colour, masks, lighting, scenery. Michael's production emulated all of these oriental techniques with dramatic effect - not to mention the hard hitting moral and political message of the play itself. The overwhelming impact of the performance was one of skilfully designed and wonderfully controlled movement: - carefully choreographed choruses - dramatic slow-motions - powerfully expressive frozen formal and informal tableaux - expanded gestures dissolving into delectable dance - rambunctious and magical moments of bravura and riotous action - snappy routines - solo sung moments of pathos and deep emotion - background rhythmic chanting and percussive sounds of feet, hands and planks - extraordinary focussed faces with eyes that pierced the innermost beings in the audience. The amazing absorption, conviction, intensity and virtuosity of these 15-18 year-old *Thespians* was a rare sight to behold. (see back cover of the Magazine).

Of course there were conventional characters: 'lovely water' watersellers, delightful dancing 'Gods' (resurrected from the 1920s with silk dresses, hip hemlines, head-bands, jet black swept-back hair and amazingly authentic Charleston gestures and steps - oh, and the odd aesthete beflannelled male God too). The trio of buxom pinafores sisters were the epitome of domineering domesticity and the pompous poses of the policeman (Ben Cooper) corralled the whole company with such command. But sixteen-year-old Chantelle (Abbi Greenland) the prostitute (and her ruthless cousin Mr Simon - whom she doubled) were bewitching; they displayed all the talent of the professional stage with charm, sophistication, streetwiseness, stylish poses, tribly-hatted conmanship and such vocal and gestural seduction.

Costumes, properties, lighting, staging and projections were magical: umbrellas converged to parachute an airman - they then poked, opened and closed like the beaks of carrion crows! Wooden planks played a symphony of sound as they were thrown, dropped and passed along; and aluminium ladders provided a silver staircase for the Gods to ascend.

But for me it was the sheer discipline, concentration and imaginative choreographed conception of the whole play which was so amazing; the beautifully orchestrated undercurrent of vocal sounds and music which gave the whole production such unity and cohesion.

Suffolk Youth Theatre with Michael and his team are without doubt a company of breath-taking ability!

Gordon Curl

obituary

Audrey Bamba O.B.E

(Margaret Talbot OBE, Chief Executive of the Central Council for Physical Recreation, was a former student at Chelsea College during the Principalship of Audrey Bamba. The following extracts are taken - with Margaret's kind permission - from her fulsome tribute to Audrey at a Thanksgiving Service held in Eastbourne on 31st March 2004).

It is a privilege to contribute to this celebration of Audrey Bamba's life and work. Audrey was a pioneer in many ways, primarily of course, in creating new opportunities for women in and through physical education; but she also set boundaries which she felt to be important for the young women for whose professional development she was responsible. Long before the term "reflective professional" appeared on the scene, that was what she was encouraging among her students. Her deep knowledge and understanding of movement was fundamental to the curriculum at Chelsea, although it was not really until I was several years into my own career, that I realised just how much of that knowledge and understanding of movement and movement forms I had absorbed, and how much it has informed my professional practice, to this day ...

Audrey's classes in "Movement Analysis" demonstrated the profound understanding of movement which characterised all her teaching ... She did (however) sometimes allow her enthusiasm to get the better of her; I remember during one lecture, working on springing. Being an earth-bound being, I was doing my best in a corner of Welkin Gymnasium, jumping up and down as hard as I could at the behest of my partner, when Audrey (Miss Bamba, of course, to us!) stopped me, called everyone over, and said, with a look of evangelical zeal, "Here is someone in real need of help!"



Chelsea at that time was a strange mixture. I guess that it still is, in many ways! But the curriculum, under Audrey's leadership, and with some inspired staff appointments, was moving towards producing the combination of knowledge, physical confidence and understanding and belief which characterise good teachers of physical education. We were encouraged to develop that intuitive understanding of movement, which comes from knowing in your body. She also knew, as we did not, that the opportunities of the B.Ed, the so-called teaching degree, were not far off, and she was determined that her students and her College would benefit. I remember her barely-concealed fury at one of her

colleagues, who had written in the margin of one of my fellow student's essays "you are not here to think". On the contrary - we were, and she had high expectations for the quality of our learning, whether in practical or theoretical areas.

She played a central role, with her fellow principals of women's colleges, in raising the standards of debate on the nature of learning and professionalism in physical education. It is appropriate to remember and celebrate today, the gift which the pioneering work of women in the single-sex tradition gave to British physical education. It still enjoys a richness and a wealth of diversity of activity and approach which is unmatched in most countries across the world, where the power of the competitive sport culture has narrowed and impoverished "physical education" towards "sport education". We in the UK face the same dangers now, if we ignore the gifts and insights which Audrey and her remarkable colleagues provided for us, and fail to articulate and implement core physical education in our schools' curricula ...

Audrey set important boundaries for her young women students. She expected high standards of professionalism and she wanted her students to achieve, without losing their own identities as women. It was not really fashionable in the '60s to claim to be feminist - but Audrey's life and work were rooted absolutely in her belief that there must be positive opportunities for all children and young people, girls and boys, whatever their gifts.

Despite her commitment to Chelsea, Audrey was never inward-looking. She was a Member of the Board of the *International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women*, later Editor of its Bulletin; and she promoted and developed many international relationships and events. She loved the stimulus and fun which learning dances from other countries provided - another area of enrichment for the Chelsea curriculum.

Audrey was a national leader, too. As well as her work with the Women Principals, she was a force to be reckoned with in the CCPR. She Chaired the *Movement and Dance Division* during a period when there was real hope for a national dance arena, strongly and effectively advocated by Audrey. Sadly, this was before the days of Lottery funding and a national hockey stadium was decided to be of higher priority. I wonder whether a dance arena would now be being used by a professional football club! Hilary Weedon and Margaret Peggie remember vividly, her gentle teasing of the distance kept from the exercise and dance organisations, by the ballroom dancers. CCPR is a wide church, and sometimes differences need to be treated with humour but understanding. Audrey's sense of mischief salted her competence at Chairing with the humour which made meetings enjoyable and worthwhile. Audrey's work with CCPR is fondly remembered also by the staff who knew her, especially the younger staff .

It's almost exactly 40 years since I was interviewed as a candidate for entry to *Chelsea College*. At that interview, I faced for the first of many times, those remarkable eyes and the challenging belief that teaching was rather more than standing in front of children and presenting enjoyable activities to them ... what shone through, above all else, was Audrey's pride and delight in her students' achievements. What a legacy Audrey has left. It is my privilege today, to celebrate that legacy, and the pride and affection shared by so many of us, in simply having been one of "Audrey's girls".

Margaret Talbot

reviews

'Summer Training for Teachers' led by Walli Meier

(Walli Meier studied with Rudolf Von Laban and Lisa Ulmann and has an Advance Diploma in Education with special reference to movement and dance and since then has specialised in work with people with special needs and in Dance Movement Therapy).

This summer term *DanceEast* presented its seventh intensive *Training for Teachers Course*, led by Walli Meier, providing professional training opportunities for local dance artists and teachers in the East of England. During six weekly two-hour sessions Walli looked at how Laban Studies can be applied during the preparation, teaching and reflection of dance. This essential course for teaching dance within the community typically attracted a variety of attendees including those with backgrounds in psychiatric nursing, acting and dance teaching amongst others who work with different ages and abilities. As always, Walli created a non-judgemental atmosphere in which everyone, no matter what their background, felt completely comfortable and provided a chance to share ideas and hear how dance benefits all kinds of different people.

Walli re-visited and refreshed our memories of Laban's basic principles, the significance of Laban behind movement and how to apply the principles to teaching in the community and choreography, in a clear and accessible way. On this *course* Walli concentrated on the use of spatial areas and effort qualities which choreographers, teachers and students perhaps may not have used before, providing them with a wider movement and quality vocabulary to create an all round bodily experience. Weekly sessions included looking at the classification of movement by breaking it down into Body, Action, Space, Dynamics and Relationships and Effort qualities, the natural affinities of a movement and how to 'play' with splitting affinities. Appreciation and observation gained by watching each other and clarifying our movements through questioning the effort qualities and the space we were using allowing us to be aware of our own, and other people's natural movement choices. The last couple of weeks were dedicated to more advanced space harmony work, creating phrases of movement based on Laban's scales of *Choreutics* (Space Harmony).

Even though I had come across *Labanotation* in the early years of my degree, I was horrified to find out that I would be looking at it again (and an effort graph that I had never seen)! Walli, however, made me and the others feel more at ease and talked us through the meaning of all these weird and wonderful symbols that are so invaluable to choreographers and other dance practitioners. The majority of our learning was based on doing and feeling the theory in the body, which was complemented by summary and discussion.



Photo by Mike Kwaeniak

On behalf of all those who took part in the *Training for Teachers Course*, I would like say a big thank you to Walli for yet another invaluable experience she has given us.

Emma Grimwood

An Irish Student's Perspective on Stage 1 Community Dance Teachers' Course

I 'fell into' dance through therapy and personal development courses and workshops I attended over the years in an effort to 'get myself sorted' (whatever that means!) until eventually there came a stage when I said to myself 'to hell with self-improvement - I just wanna dance!'. I then discovered and became a passionate follower of Gabrielle Rotlis 5 *Rhythms* work which I continue to practice and love.

For the first year or so I've been seeking a means whereby I can share the joy and transformative nature of dance which I've discovered with others - and much as I love the 5 *Rhythms* it didn't seem to be the correct vehicle for me to do this.

Then by quite a series of serendipitous occurrences I came across Laban's work and the *Community Dance Teachers' Course* which as fate would have it was starting in Ireland shortly thereafter. From the moment I spoke to Shane Brennan (of the *Midland's Arts Centre*) it seemed 'right' and with each week-end it just keeps getting 'righter'!

Not only is it exciting to see and experience ordinary everyday movement in fresh and unusual ways, but it's wonderful to see the endless ways in which this information can be used in a multitude of situations from education to therapy to performance etc.

Indeed, if I have one quibble with the course it is this 'For God's sake stop planting ideas in my head, its full to bursting point as it is and there's nine weekends to go! I'll never be able to put them all into practice even if I live to be one hundred!'.

But to end on a serious note, I can't say enough about the support and encouragement I've received from all involved in organising and teaching the course thus far and in particular Ann Ward. Due to unavoidable personal circumstances I'm unable to partake in weekend 3 (which was really taking me apart) but Ann has been so reassuring and supportive that while I still feel sad I feel confident that I will receive the help and facilities needed to ensure that I don't miss out on anything in this wonderful course.

Bette King

Community/Performance Conference Bryant College, Rhode Island 4-6 June 2004

{Anita Clark is currently Artistic Director of citymoves dancespace, the regional dance agency for the North East of Scotland based in Aberdeen. In September she takes up the post of Head of Dance at the Scottish Arts Council.}

Sometime last year, I received a message in my in-box. A call for papers for an International conference - COMMUNITY/ PERFORMANCE. The email came through one of the networks I am involved with, *Foundation of Community Dance* or *Dance UK* - I forget which. As the director of the UK's most northerly dance agency based in Aberdeen, it is easy to feel isolated. Receiving daily emails about events and opportunities throughout the UK, or further a field really helps remind me that what we do at citymoves is part of the wider sector. As well as bringing some fantastic opportunities to my desk. Including this one from Petra Kuppers, Conference Director, Bryant College in Rhode Island, USA.

Phrase such as: 'the efficacy of arts interventions in building communities', 'the relations between performance theory and practice' and 'are there separate aesthetics of community arts?'... caught my eye. These are values and questions that are central to my working practice and the programme I have developed at *citymoves*. So I forwarded this intriguing email to my personal account to read and consider in more detail that evening.

reviews

Fast forward nine months and I am driving through Rhode Island trying to work out the directions to Bryant College. Thanks to a *Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship* and with the support of *Aberdeen City Council* I am here to participate in, and contribute to the college's first international conference, *COMMUNITY/PERFORMANCE*.

The conference is the brain-child of Petra, originally from the UK and now and Assistant Professor of Performance Studies at Bryant College and Artistic Director of *The Olimpias Performance Research Projects*. Petra's own practice is rooted in the values of participatory and community performance and she is widely published in the field of Disability performance.

Over the three days about a range of innovative projects throughout the world and met the people behind them - the All Stars Talent Show in New York, the hip-hop 'Urban Theatre Projects' in Western Australia and the wonderful, subversive tactics of the feretdhteh toosi artists spreading the urban legend of Pittsburgh's underground river. I empathised with the challenges facing arts educators with the increasing bureaucratisation of the arts with the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind legislation. Closer to home, I shared in the stories collated and presented by artists Ruth Ben-Tovim and Trish O'Shea as part of their on-going project in Sharrow, a neighbourhood in Sheffield. The delegates at the conference represented the full spectrum of art forms and cross arts practice and I particularly enjoyed meeting artists from different disciplines and learning of their approaches to community engagement in the arts. I was invited to speak about a *citymoves* project *Generations* and screen the DVD documenting the process and final performance of the project. *GENERATIONS* was a cross-generational, site specific, community performance, created in the Autumn of 2002 for the unique venue of Aberdeen Art Gallery. The project was established to engage the local community in a creative arts project centred around the gallery. The process undertaken involved the participants choreographically and performative, bringing together community and professional performers. The performance involved over 60 performers aged 5- 70+, working with choreographer Mhairi Allan, Jillian Thomson, Sara Schena and myself and composer Karen McIver. For *citymoves*, this was a valuable opportunity to present the work we are engaged in our locality in an international context.

Throughout the weekend I was challenged about my practice and

ensuring that integrity is central to all that I do. I met artists who are committed to the communities, that they root themselves and their work in. I was impressed by the dedication of individuals striding out in innovative and individual ways to bring about a democratising of the arts. For me, the conference re-asserted my fundamental belief in the power of bringing people together to dance.

Anita Clark

report from the courses officer

Our new course in Co. Westmeath, Ireland, for Midland Arts, has got off to a flying start. We have already completed the first three weekends and course members are looking forward to a break over the summer to consolidate the work covered so far. As usual we have a really interesting group of people from many different backgrounds. We are pleased to welcome them into the Guild and wish them well with their course. Special thanks to Shane Brennan for setting up the course and all his support on the weekends. We're looking forward to the rest of it!

Ann Ward

LABAN GUILD

STAGE 1 COMMUNITY DANCE TEACHERS COURSE

In conjunction with Essexdance and New Hall School Commencing 18/19 SEPTEMBER 2004 in CHELMSFORD A part time course of 10 weekends, plus assessment, between September 2004 and November 2005. This mainly practical course comprises 3 modules on Laban Fundamentals, Teaching Styles and Strategies and Dance Making for Community Groups. Tutors include local specialists Michael Platt, Caroline Mummery and Pamela Harling, as well as regular experienced tutors from the Guild.

SOME PLACES STILL AVAILABLE, details from Ann Ward, 01621 850 441 or email: awardglenkeen@bigfoot.com



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

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Laban Theatre CREEKSIDE is a company of artists, dancers, choreographers, designers, producers, writers, composers, musicians, technicians, and administrators. We are a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

Performance
Choreography
Repertory
Technique
Scenography
Dance Science
Community Dance
Research

september

Saturday September 11th Laban in Chesterfield - 'Carnival - a dancing day of fun and celebration' led by Ann Ward. Contact Laban in Places Studholme, Sandley Gillingham Dorset SP8 5DZ Tel 01747 826007 email lydia.everitt@btinternet.com

Saturday /Sunday September 18/19th LABAN GUILD STAGE 1 community dance teachers course (see main notice)

Friday 24 September, 630pm Tickets £8 / £6 (concessions)
Shorts@Laban.it

Part 1 of two evenings of short films presented by the Italian Cultural Institute dedicated to dance and performance arts.

Thursday 31 September Friday 1 October Time tbc £3
Masters 2004 MA European Dance Theatre Practice

october

Tuesday 5 October (time tbc) £3
Masters 2004 MA Choreography

Wednesday 6th October to Wednesday 17th November
Dance East - Training for Teachers Course - Northgate Arts Centre, Ipswich
Contact: DanceEast on 01473 639230

Friday 8 Saturday 9 October 730pm £12 / £8 (concessions)
Henri Oguike Dance Company
Mixed bill Whitespace, Front Line, F.P.S (Frames Per Second) Parts 1 & 2, Finale
Henri Oguike's work packs a powerful theatrical punch and is celebrated for its virtuoso dancing and vivid dramatic atmosphere.

Tuesday 12 & Wednesday 13 October 730pm £12 / £8 (concessions)
***Stan Wont Dance - Sinner**
A self-destructive solo for two men. Based upon the events surrounding the Soho Bomber, Sinner explores our societies' need to construct icons of absolute good and evil.

Thursday 14 October Part 2 630pm £8 / £6 (concessions)
Shorts@Laban.it
Part 2 of the series of short films presented by the Italian Cultural Institute.

november

Thursday 4 Friday 5 November 730pm £12 / £8 (concessions)
Sean Tuan John The Brothers Very Grim
Sean Tuan John is a choreographer and performer with a knack for crafting banal, everyday foibles and behaviour into sequences of dance.

Mara Castilho/MO.TIV CITY LOST 0.11
A multimedia performance piece conceived as five short films. Produced with the support of Laban and the Portuguese Ministry of Culture.

Thursday 18 Friday 19 November 730pm £12 / £8 (concessions)
H2Dance - Silent Movie
Formed by Hanna Gillgren and Heidi Rustgaard in 1999, h2dance creates honest, reflective and dynamic work, often punctuated by moments of gentle humour.

Tuesday 23 Wednesday 24 November 730pm £12 / £8 (concessions)
The Cholmondeleys and The Featherstonehaughs with the Victims of Death
20th Anniversary Tour Flesh & Blood and Double Take
2004 is the 20th anniversary of two of contemporary dance's most innovative and groundbreaking companies. The Cholmondeleys and Featherstonehaughs reunite to perform a special programme of award-winning pieces by choreographer, artistic director and founder member, Lea Anderson. Friday 24 September 6.30pm

Contact LABAN THEATRE CREEKSIDE LONDON SE8 3DZ BOX OFFICE 020 8469 9500 WWW.LABAN.ORG
The Laban Theatre programme is a mix of the brightest names in contemporary dance and the most exciting up-and-coming new artists. This Autumn Laban continues to present a programme of artists who challenge received notions of what contemporary dance is and can be. This season at Laban you will see work which is sometimes unpredictable, but is always challenging, entertaining and illuminating.

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

