

# *Diamond Jubilee 2006*

## *Special Edition*

*Centre star drawing by Rudolf Laban*  
*'Interpenetration of Crystalline Structures'*

# *Movement & Dance*

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# Editorial

On this Diamond Jubilee year of the Laban Guild we are delighted to have messages of congratulations from all our Patrons: Sir Walter Bodmer, William Forsythe and Bernard Hepton. The warmth of their good wishes and tributes for the work of the Guild are enormously appreciated and we are most honoured to have their continued support as our Patrons.

Ten years ago, on the Guild's Golden Jubilee, Council decided to make a special publication to celebrate that occasion – which it did. However, the present Magazine seems to be enjoying a period of colourful presentation (thanks to our designer, Council's funding, and the co-operation of Dance Companies, Community Dance Courses and others); it was felt that on this celebratory occasion, we should expand the Magazine to provide a souvenir edition with as broad a range of topics as possible – thus reflecting the Guild's wide-ranging Constitutional Aims. We have, therefore, seized the opportunity to solicit contributions under the four headings of:

1) '*Celebrations, Reminiscences, Legacies*' (with delightful reminiscences from Lorna Wilson, Sally Archbutt, Geraldine Stephenson, Janet Goodridge, Joan English, Warren Lamb and Vivien Bridson). 2) We have also tried to represent recently '*Inspired Initiatives*' with accounts of a very promising *Phoenix Project* led by Anna Carlisle - together with moving and lively reviews by twelve members of a remarkable DVD by Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Luis Espana on '*The American Invasion 1962-72*'. A telling account of *Laban's Concept of Health* has also been provided by Carol-Lynne Moore and a fascinating background to the inspired initiative of the NRCD by Dr Judith Chapman. 3) Our '*Critical and Philosophical*' pieces have drawn a penetrating response from Dance Critic Ann Nugent on the choreography of our Patron William Forsythe, together with some philosophical pieces by Alan Salter and the Editor. 4) '*Community Drama and Dance*' has captured dramatic moments from the *Suffolk Youth Theatre* and Walli Meier's Workshop, as well as moving contributions from Dee Scott and Mary Ellen Coyle. We thank all our contributors warmly and hope this edition will serve as a landmark in the Guild's sixty years of endeavours.

We are grateful for an impressive survey of HMIs' involvement in physical education and dance by Don Buckland in his 'Thanks for the Memory'; whilst his contribution is a personal view - underpinned by the 'collective memory of some of (his) retired colleagues' - Don provides a fascinating inside account of the (often unacknowledged) role played by HMIs in assisting the growth of Rudolf Laban's ideas in education during the past sixty years.

It will be recalled that the present Editor took over as an 'interim' measure during the indisposition of Stephen Parry, the previous Editor, some three years ago. This interim period has extended to twelve publications and it is now felt that the time has come for the Guild Council to appoint a more permanent Editor who can take over with renewed energy and initiative. May I therefore thank all those who have given me their wholehearted cooperation (not least our typesetter and designer Pam Anderton) and ask members to give their unstinting support to the Guild's new Editor.

*Gordon Curl*

### Contributions to:

#### The Editor:

Gordon Curl  
Copse End  
Conyngnam Lane  
Bridge, Canterbury  
Kent  
CT4 5JX  
phone: 01227 830421  
email: gfcurl@globalnet.co.uk

#### Advertising:

The Editor

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#### Editorial Advisory Board:

Pam Anderton  
Anna Carlisle MBE  
Stephen Parry  
Heidi Wilson

#### Membership Secretary:

Janice Anderson  
7 Surridge  
High Leigh  
Nr Knutsford  
Cheshire  
WA16 6PU.  
email: janice\_anderson@btinternet.com

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Centre drawing by Rudolf Laban from the Rudolf Laban Archive,  
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# The Laban Guild Diamond Jubilee

message of congratulations from patron Sir Walter Bodmer



(Sir Walter Bodmer MA PhD FRCPATH FRS is Principal of *Hertford College Oxford University*. He was formerly Director General and Director of Research of the *Imperial Cancer Research Fund*. He became a fellow of the *Royal Society* in 1974 and was knighted in 1986. He is a foreign associate of the *US National Academy of Sciences* and a foreign honorary member of the *American Academy of Arts and Sciences*.)

Sir Walter was President of the *Human Genome Organization (HUGO)*; president of the *British Association for the Advancement of Science*; Chairman of the *BBC Science Consultative Group*; and Chairman of the Trustees of the *Natural History Museum*. He is currently a Trustee of *Sir John Soane's Museum* and the first President of *IFAAST*, the *International Federation of Associations for the Advancement of Science and Technology*. In 1995, Sir Walter was appointed Chancellor of the *University of Salford*.

Academic appointments include honorary fellowships at *Keble College, Oxford*; *Clare College, Cambridge*; the *Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons* and the *Royal Society of Edinburgh*. He has published extensively and has been awarded honorary degrees and prizes for his achievements in science.

Sir Walter has served as Chairman on the Board of Governors of LABAN Creekside and continues to serve on the Governing Body of TRINITY LABAN.)

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I am delighted to offer the Guild my sincere congratulations on the occasion of its *Diamond Jubilee*. I do not suppose anyone could have predicted then what would be the fate of the Guild and the future of Laban's work in the *UK* and elsewhere in 60 years time. Early meetings of the *Council* took place in my parents home at 1 Stanton Avenue, West Didsbury, Manchester, before Laban and Lisa moved south to Addlestone. The meeting place was my father's doctor's waiting room, where Sylvia Bodmer, my mother, gave her classes. That is how I first met so many of the pioneers of Laban's work in this country. The early Minutes were already very formal and concerned, as always, with membership and Guild activities. *The Manchester Dance Circle*, which was founded even earlier, in 1943, by Sylvia and Lisa, but is sadly no more, was affiliated to the Guild once that had been founded. It is remarkable to think that these endeavours started during and so soon after the devastation of the Second World War.

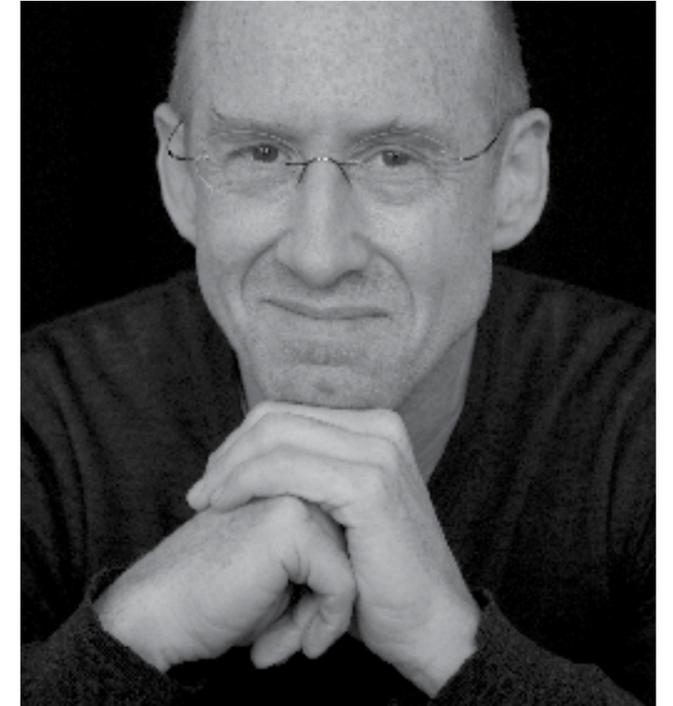
Some years later, towards the end of the 1950s, I myself became a member of the *Guild Council*, no doubt nominated by Sylvia, who became Chairman. That brought me to Addlestone on a number of occasions. It was a delightful place but quite hard to get to. I cannot imagine what qualifications I was thought to have that justified my becoming a member of the *Council*. I suspect being a male was a key, though by that time I had attended one of the *Modern Dance Summer Holiday* courses at *Dartington Hall* and had even written an article for the magazine. Moving to California with my family ended that episode of my contact with the Guild, which I am delighted now to be continuing as a *Patron*.

It is good to see Laban's work still thriving and the Guild still very active in its *Diamond Jubilee* year. I can be pretty sure that I will not be there for the Guild's Centenary, but I am sure that the Guild will still be going strong then.

*Walter Bodmer*

# The Laban Guild Diamond Jubilee

message of congratulations from patron William Forsythe



(William Forsythe is recognised as the world's foremost choreographer of contemporary ballet. His work is celebrated for re-orienting the practice of ballet from its identification with classical repertoire into a dynamic 21st century art form.)

Raised and principally trained in New York, William Forsythe arrived on the European dance scene in his early 20s as Resident Choreographer of the Stuttgart Ballet while also creating new works for ballet companies in Munich, the Hague, London, Basel, Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris, New York and San Francisco. In 1984, he began a 20-year tenure as Director of the Frankfurt Ballet where he created many of the most celebrated dance theatre works of our time, such as 'The Loss of Small Detail' (1991) in collaboration with composer Thom Willems and designer Issey Miyake. Other key works from the Ballett Frankfurt years include 'Gänge' (1982), 'Artifact' (1984), 'Impressing the Czar' (1988), 'Limb's Theorem' (1990), 'A L I E / N A (C) T I O N' (1992), 'Eidos:Telos' (1995), 'Endless House' (1999) and 'Kammer/Kammer' (2000).

William Forsythe's choreography and his companies' performances have won overwhelming audience acclaim and the most prestigious awards the field has to offer, such as the Bessie (1988, 1998, 2004), Laurence Olivier Award (1992, 1999), Commandeur des Arts et Lettres (1999), the German Distinguished Service Cross (1997) and the Wexner Prize (2002). After the closure of Ballett Frankfurt in 2004, he established a new, more independent ensemble, The Forsythe Company, and his most recent creations are developed and performed exclusively by the new company while his previous work is prominently featured in the repertoire of virtually every major ballet company in the world including The Kirov, The New York City Ballet, The National Ballet of Canada, The Royal Ballet Covent Garden and the Paris Opera Ballet among many others.

In 1994, William virtually reinvented the teaching of dance improvisation with his pioneering and award-winning computer application 'Improvisation Technologies: a tool for the analytical dance eye' which

is used by professional companies, dance conservatories, universities, post-graduate architecture programs and even secondary schools.

As an educator, William is regularly invited to lecture and give workshops at major universities and cultural institutions internationally. He served as the first Mentor in Dance in the inaugural cycle of the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative and currently co-directs and teaches in the Dance Apprentice Network aCross Europe (D.A.N.C.E.) program. He has been awarded an honorary fellowship from the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance in London and an honorary doctorate from the Juilliard School in New York. He is also a Patron of the Laban Guild for Movement and Dance.)

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On the occasion of the Laban Guild's Diamond Jubilee, I send my wholehearted congratulations to all of you who have worked so diligently to promote the ideas and ideals of Rudolf Laban.

The Laban Guild provides a vital resource for the dance community and its enduring presence is a sign of its consequence for the field. It is an organization with which I am honored to be associated.

Wishing you continued success for the next 60 years and beyond.

*William Forsythe*

# The Laban Guild Diamond Jubilee

message of congratulations from patron Bernard Hepton



(Bernard Hepton is known widely as Actor, Producer, Director, TV and Radio Guest. His prolific career includes principal roles in: *Emma* (Mr Woodhouse), *Bleak House* (Krook), *Mansfield Park* (Sir Thomas Bertram), *Ghandi* (GOC), *An Inspector Calls* (Inspector Goole), *Kessler* and *Secret Army* (Albert Foiret), *Blood Money* (Det Chief Supt Meadows), *Tinker, Tailor, Solider, Spy* (Toby Esterhase), *I Claudius* (Pallas), *Colditz* (The Kommandant), *Henry VIII and His Six Wives* (Cranmer), *Elizabeth R* (Archbishop Cranmer), *The Elusive Pimpernel* (Chauvelin), *Son of Man* (Caiaphas High Priest of Jerusalem) and many more. His productions include *The Wednesday Thriller* and *Coriolanus* and his guest appearances are too numerous to mention – but *Midsomer Murders*, *Bergerac*, *Some Mothers do 'Ave 'Em*, *Troubleshooters*, *Saturday Night Thriller* spring to mind.)

Just after the War, Esme Church opened her *Theatre School* in Bradford and in her great wisdom she invited Rudolf Laban to teach her pupils the importance and intricacies of movement. I was one of those pupils and for me Laban's teaching has been, and still is, greatly influential. He stays with you.

If I am not mistaken that was the first time Laban had taught actors. Perhaps I should say aspiring actors, as we were. Naturally we were curious as to who this man was. Rumour had it that he was a refugee who had somehow helped the *War Effort* in factories and down the mines, and here he was to teach us dance! But his definition of dance – "Meaningful Movement" – added a new dimension to our limited understanding of what Dance entailed. "You can dance with your eyebrow" was one of his sayings, which surprised and intrigued us. After many months of work exploring and refining muscle control, reducing his *Alphabet of Efforts* down to a minimal expression, and being made aware of body language and the space surrounding the body, we began to understand what a wonderful tool he was offering us to be used and experimented with in our work as actors.

At times Laban was indisposed or busy with his studio in Manchester. It was then that Lisa Ullmann taught us, but the person who spent the most time with us, shepherding us to some understanding of applying Laban's teaching, was the Guild's Vice President Geraldine Stephenson, and I am glad to say that over the years Gerry and I have been in touch both professionally and as friends.

Our time in Bradford – was it really 60 years ago? – must have been near the time when Laban formed the Guild. I am honoured to be one of its Patrons, although not now as active as I would like to be, and I send my warmest congratulations on its Diamond Jubilee, and my very good wishes for its continued growth and influence.

PS. I would like to draw attention to Walli Meier's offering on page 21 of the current *Movement and Dance*, on *Gesture* – particularly politicians.

*Bernard Hepton*

# Thanks for the Memory!

(Don Buckland - former Staff Inspector for Physical Education - reminisces on his personal experiences from student days to his work in the Inspectorate. He outlines the role played by himself and his colleagues in the promotion of dance in education and the concurrent influence of Rudolf Laban. We are reminded that the Department of Education's publications established a firm commitment to Laban's work – not least in 'Planning the Programme' and in 'Moving and Growing'.

Our Editor was always delighted at Don's arrival at Modern Dance Holiday Courses where he found his company re-assuring - especially when, as usual, men were in the noticeable minority!

Someone once said that memory is history recorded in the brain. At the age of 75 it provides a certain pleasure to exercise one's memory and look back at that great mixture of joy, sadness and disappointment that punctuates a life. When your editor invited me to ponder on the degree to which *Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools* had been instrumental in assisting the growth of Rudolf Laban's ideas in education I could only draw upon memories of my own limited experience some 15 years on from retirement. I decided, therefore, to call on the collective memory of some of my retired colleagues who had carried physical education or dance as a specialist responsibility. I also spent some time in the *Department for Education and Skills Library* looking at reports and publications about dance, but I could not claim that this was in anyway complete or systematic. Then, as I was preparing to write, I was sent a copy of *'The American Invasion 1962 - 1972'*, a DVD prepared by Valerie Preston Dunlop and Luis Espana that brought to mind some of the events of the time and the personalities most closely involved in the growth of dance in education. This article is, however, a view from the sidelines; a personal and limited impression of how change came about in the movement experiences offered to children in schools over a period of some 50 years.

## 1933 And All That!

My time at school was before and during the Second World War and my early experience of physical training activities was based on the 1933 syllabus in a single sex primary school. There was no hall, only an asphalt playground on which we ran, jumped and improved our skills using coconut mats, benches, hoops, beanbags, skipping ropes and canes. At grammar school we had the use of a hall that doubled as a gymnasium in which we learned *Ling* gymnastics. The ex-sergeant-major had only recently relinquished responsibility for drill and been redeployed as school caretaker, to be replaced by a young teacher trained in the early years at *Carnegie College*. He once told me that he could do back-flips the length of *Crewe Railway Station*. We were proud of our immaculate white shorts and gym shoes and our ability to follow an exercise routine in four lines and do tumbling sequences down the upholstered agility mat. We also played the major team games (but not soccer) at our playing fields some two miles away.

## Come Dancing!

At *Bognor Regis Training College* I joined a main PE group of just five students and with our *Carnegie* trained lecturer we made a good practical learning set of three-a-side for just about every competitive game invented. I also came under the influence of the lecturer for women's PE who took us for dance. For the first time I was introduced to expressive movement which enriched my already well-



developed interest in drama. Moving on to *Carnegie College*, still in its single sex days, the programme was focused on skill development across a wide range of activities. Dance was of the Scandinavian variety and was an evening activity arranged with students from the *Yorkshire College of Housewifery*. I was encouraged, however, by Stanley Beaumont (who went on to be the Principal of *Nonington College of Physical Education*) to complete a study of dance in West Riding schools under the guidance of A R Stone, the authority's senior inspector for drama. There was at this time an enormous groundswell of enthusiasm for Laban's work in the authority under the direction of its CEO Sir Alec Clegg and advisers, such as Diana Jordan and Margaret Dunn. My study became the basis of a course in dance drama that I taught to the first two years of the secondary school in which I began my teaching. It was clear that an increasing number of PE teachers were taking a greater interest in movement education and in what came to be known as 'modern educational dance'. When I returned to Leeds in 1963 to take the advanced course in PE, I was interested to discover that *Carnegie* had appointed a lecturer in dance. These experiences, together with attendance at short weekend and holiday courses at *The Art of Movement Centre*, *Chelsea College* and *Dartington*, are probably not dissimilar to those of many male teachers of PE in the 1960s and

bring me to the time, in 1969, when I joined *Her Majesty's Inspectorate* and became involved to a limited extent in the process of curriculum change and development.

## Shall We Join the Dance?

Early *HMI* pioneers in promoting the expressive aspects of the curriculum within the Inspectorate were Robin Tanner, an artist, and Christian Schiller, a mathematician. Through the courses they ran in the 1950s for primary teachers, mostly lasting two weeks, teachers were encouraged to create for their pupils a child-centred environment where time would be given to calligraphy,

painting, modelling, design, music and movement, and to exploiting the child's natural curiosity and imagination.



Another pioneer in developing awareness of Laban's work within the Inspectorate was Ruth Foster who went on to become *Staff Inspector for Physical Education*. She was a great disciple of Laban and did much evangelical work among colleges and schools. Leonard Clark, a colleague I knew only briefly, was *HMI* from 1936 to 1970. In his book, *The Inspector Remembers*, he writes about assisting on a course for youth leaders in 1944 on drama, poetry, music and movement. The movement was taken by Ruth. He writes:

*'In the evening I would join the movement sessions. These were very new to most of us. Ruth, a magnificent intuitive teacher, led us along the lines that had been laid down by Rudolf Laban. I never thought I should see RH Charles dancing round the hall. It was very exciting, if at times embarrassing for us. But most of the students lapped it up, for Ruth was encouraging and convincing.'*

All *HMI* with *PE* as a subject responsibility actively encouraged dance as an important aspect of expressive work in schools but deserving of special mention for their commitment and influence are, after Ruth Foster, Myfanwy Dewey, who worked in the North West of England when the *Art of Movement Studio* was set up in Manchester, June Warner, who made a number of short films recording promising dance work in schools, Joan Goodrich, the first *HMI* to have special responsibility for dance, Bill Sagar, Bill Grier, Jane Pollard and Denzil Flanagan, all of whom have sadly passed away, as well as Sybil Grant, Miriam Osborn, Sally Johns, Athalie Knowles, Gill Burke, BJ Lewis and Gordon Clay, who are still with us.

#### Spreading the Word!

One function of *HMI* was to identify good practice and, having done so, assist in the process of spreading it to other schools. Inspectors were able to observe the effectiveness of Laban's ideas and to judge how compatible they could be with the practice of education as a whole. Curriculum development in the late sixties and early seventies was not part of the *HMI* remit but specialist staff inspectors were expected to give a lead in their subjects through courses and pamphlets. The teachers' short-course programme formed an important part of the work of inspectors and provided the opportunity to meet and discuss ideas with teachers, college lecturers and advisers. Many courses were mounted in the delightful setting of Sir Alec Clegg's centre for the refreshment of teachers and school staff, *Woolley Hall College*, in Wakefield, where Laban's principles permeated the study of movement and related arts subjects. Inevitably, the courses touched only a small proportion of teachers but they often sent members away inspired to share ideas more widely. They were staffed by *HMI* and invited lecturers and teachers, and attended by head teachers, college lecturers, advisers and scale-post holders. Practical work was always a strong feature and involved movement, art and music sessions, discussion, school visits and talks by notable educationists. The courses were usually oversubscribed. Courses for pupils with special educational needs also included movement sessions based on Laban's principles, reflecting Veronica Sherborne's pioneering work for pupils with severe handicaps. Similarly, movement sessions were an integral part of the programme on courses for teachers of drama and helped to establish relationships between course members and provide opportunities to explore dramatic themes through dance.

By the time Laban was established in England there was already a developing organisational framework of schools, advice and training that enabled him to make his ideas known and experienced. A considerable physical education element was included in the initial training courses for primary teachers and in many areas schools had the support of specialist advisers. Regional groups such as the *Manchester Dance Circle* and the *West Riding Movement Study Group* encouraged teachers to build up their experience. Summer schools and *DES Courses* provided more intensive residential opportunities, and for over 20 years the *Laban Art of Movement Centre* mounted a range of advanced courses. Laban's book, *Modern Educational Dance*, published in 1948, became a definitive guide for teachers and

teacher-trainers. Lisa Ullmann contributed to the writing of the book drawing on her involvement in work taking place in schools and colleges. She is remembered by colleagues who trained at *The Art of Movement Centre* as an enthusiastic and inspirational teacher and leader. She was particularly influential in the 1950s and 1960s when she acted as external examiner to a number of teacher training colleges and helped to maintain standards across a network of institutions.

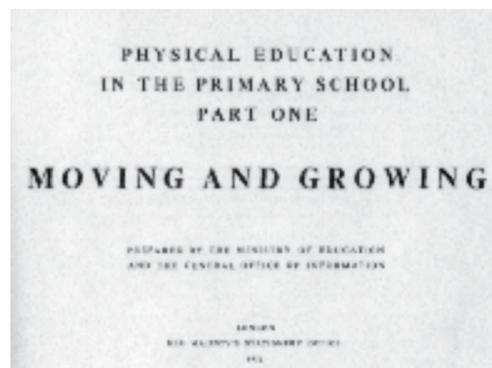


The *Plowden Report* of 1967 reflected and commented favourably on these influences on the development of child-centred primary education but it was also critical of some of the work found in schools. Laban's methods were in tune with the mood of the time in that they encouraged children to create, express and communicate their own ideas. However, as the educational tide turned, the *Plowden Report* was subsequently criticised as being a progressives' charter by those who did not recognise that it was a balanced review in its insistence upon the inclusion of a core of skills in literacy and numeracy.

#### Films and Publications

The *Schools Council* films, *Free to Move*, and the subsequent short films reached most *Local Education Authorities* in 1968. *HMI* supported the production team by helping to identify good practice and by acting as consultants to the film makers. It was generally accepted by specialist inspectors at the time that 'good practice' included the observation and analysis of movement based on Laban's ideas. The relationship of movement education to other aspects of the curriculum such as art, music and drama, was seen to open up new opportunities for collaboration between teachers and other specialists.

A number of publications by *HMI* and the *Department for Education* over the years had some part to play in raising awareness of Laban's work. The wonderfully illustrated publications, *Moving and Growing* and *Planning the Programme*, issued in 1952 and 1953 respectively, set out the stages of children's physical development and showed how children learn by exploration, repetition, creation, and contact with each other and their teacher.



Dances were suggested that built on contrasting qualities of movement, the exploration of space, and response to a stimulus such as a gong or drum. The later publication, *Movement - PE in the Primary Years*, also written by *HMI* and published in

1972, made special reference to the influence of Rudolf Laban and drew attention to the emphasis which his work gave to the qualitative aspects inherent in all human movement.

#### Reports and Surveys

Up to the late 1970s, school inspection reports had limited circulation, whereas later they were published openly and, with computerisation, it became possible to assess national trends and standards across age groups and aspects of the curriculum. The findings were sometimes disseminated in survey reports. A pamphlet, *Dance in Secondary Schools*, published by *HMI* in 1983 indicated a mixed picture of some very good work in a few schools but little involvement by boys or male teachers, often poor facilities, few cross-curricular links and a premature emphasis on performance sometimes leading to superficiality. Where it was good, however, it was often very good and involved the use of dance artists and theatre visits. Another survey report of dance in a sample of secondary schools was published in 1989 and came to similar conclusions. A more recent publication by Ofsted, 'The Arts Inspected' (Heinemann 1998), set out the place of dance in the National Curriculum and indicated encouraging progress in children's ability to compose, perform and appraise their work in dance. By their involvement in inspection, their liaison with chief officers and LEA administrators, the close contact they were able to maintain with the staff of teacher training colleges, and through short courses and publications, *HMI* had the opportunity to support the spread of Laban's ideas and give encouragement to the many gifted teachers who carried forward the work he started.

#### Uneven Progress

Progress in establishing dance in primary and secondary schools has not always been continuous or without setbacks. Many factors have, at various times, adversely affected the growth of dance. Some teachers attempted to introduce dance without the necessary confidence or knowledge. Men, in particular, were sometimes not at ease when teaching dance. Even in parts of the country where dance flourished, the best work was often confined to certain schools where there were exceptional and committed teachers. The move to graduate status for all teachers changed the nature and content of teacher training courses. For a time, greater stress was placed on academic study at the expense of teaching practice. There were fewer opportunities for teachers to have their initial training reinforced and continued when specialist inspectors and advisers were reduced in number or redeployed to other duties. Departments of physical education for boys and girls merged and the strong tradition of dance education for girls was weakened. Boys, if they danced at all, mostly found it in after school dance schools. The development of the National Curriculum and demands for more rigour and assessment of children's progress initially eroded the time available for physical education and other aesthetic and practical elements of the curriculum. The provision of 'A' and 'GCSE' courses in aspects of physical education was encouraging but initially the courses involved only a small minority of pupils.

#### Momentum Regained

When in 1989 'Physical Education 5 - 16, Curriculum Matters 16' was published in the *HMI Series*, there was general dismay expressed in the response by the *Council for Dance Education*, the *National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (Dance Section)*, the *National Dance Teachers Association* and the *Standing Committee for Dance in Higher Education*. These bodies had been tireless in their efforts to promote dance in schools and colleges through their effective dissemination of advice and information, and through their inspirational courses which continue to this day. In the view of the respondents, the *HMI* document had not established the fundamental nature of dance as an art form, dance would not flourish under the umbrella of *PE*, and dance in the *National Curriculum* would be shackled by outworn ideas and obsolete practice. They urged that a parallel document, 'Dance Education 5 - 16', should be speedily formulated and published. It did not

appear in that form. The writers were equally dismayed when details of 'The National Curriculum Working Group for Physical Education' was announced. The fear was that the emphasis was to be entirely on competitive sport. Fortunately, there were those on the Working Group with a broader vision and the worst fears were not realised. Dance took its rightful place in the National Curriculum and the place of the arts in education was increasingly recognised. Strong voices are now being heard urging the restoration of adequate time for physical education and the arts. There is concern about obesity and the lack of exercise in and out of school hours. The forthcoming Olympics 2012 is also likely to prompt attention and action.



Laban's framework for movement observation was, of course, intended to be much wider than dance, and does in fact include personality assessment through movement pattern analysis, movement therapy and Labanotation, which are all very active topics today. His anatomical analysis has to some degree been superseded by more quantitative systems of analysis relying on measurement, such as biomechanics, which are considered to be more relevant to other aspects

of *PE* such as games, athletics and swimming. Perhaps some developments would have taken place without the awareness of Laban's work. The move towards catering for individual differences, the widening of the programme to include dance and outdoor pursuits, and the emphasis on child-centred approaches and autonomous learning would surely still have come about. Nevertheless, Laban and the many outstanding exponents of his work added much at a significant time of change and growth. Dance has continued to prosper in a variety of settings. There is great enthusiasm for dance in all its forms that can be built upon. The *Laban Guild* and the new *LABAN* at Creekside have important roles to play in preserving and propagating all that is valuable in Laban's ideas and ensuring continued growth and development of educational and theatre dance.

#### The Legacy

Laban and his disciples have left us with a rich legacy. By their ability to adapt to changing times and attitudes, dance is now on a firmer footing in schools than ever before. Nearly eighteen thousand pupils were entered for *GCSE Dance* in 2005 at over 900 centres. The numbers entered for 'A' Level Dance are flourishing with many students aiming for teaching or theatre dance. Colleges for Sport and the Performing Arts are growing in number and fulfilling the requirement to offer dance in the *National Curriculum* and ensure that dance is rooted in the feeder primary schools and extended into the community. Anyone



Community Dance at Brockhill

who doubts what is possible should read Jackie Mortimer's article in the Winter 2005 edition of the *Laban Guild Magazine*, 'Community Dance at Brockhill'. We remember fondly what is past. The future is bright.

Don Buckland

# On the Origin of the Laban Art of Movement Guild

(Sally Archbutt describes the background to the formation of the Laban Guild – providing us with some rare insights into her personal thoughts and feelings as a ballet enthusiast, a dance student, teacher and lecturer. She questions the rationale of the child-centred approach and its implications for dance education as well as the attendant attitudes of teachers to the art form of dance.)



Rudolf Laban responded to the great 19th/20th century discoveries and developments in all fields of knowledge, the Sciences, the Arts, and Education. He focused on the study of *movement as the material of dance*, on the *functions of dance* in wider contexts than only the theatre, physical health and social behaviour, on *how movement and dance might be studied more scientifically*, and suggested and developed a *new notation system* and a *radical new approach to dance and movement training*.

Regarding dancers as so much more than bodies to be trained, he took into account psychological knowledge about human growth, emotional life and character and the importance of *raising the ability to think*. Not restricting himself to the study only of dance, in the tradition of Noverre and Delsarte, Laban also studied movements in all kinds of occupations and situations.

Stemming mainly from the work of Laban and his followers, in Europe from the time of the First World War there was growing interest in what was called the 'Expressionist' or 'Free' Dance. In America there were also similar developments which regarded dance as a serious art form and not merely as an added social grace or spectacular entertainment.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, across Europe there was much concern about physical health. In Britain this led to the founding of the Physical Education Colleges, which had a predominantly anatomical, physiological and physiotherapeutic attitude, and the inclusion of a range of movement activities including Gymnastics, Dance, Games, Swimming, and Remedial Movement. In the 1930s, initially at Bedford, they began to include *Central European Dance* as well as folk and ballroom dance. It was taught by Joan Goodrich, who had been seconded to study with Mary Wigman, a famous student of Laban.

1925 had seen the founding of the *Dartington Community* experiment by Leonard and Dorothy Elmhirst in Devon, who housed an American dancer, Margaret Barr, a *Dalcroze* exponent, Louise Soelberg, and from 1934, with the rise of *Nazism*, Kurt Jooss and his Laban based Dance Company from Germany. One of its members was Lisa Ullmann. Laban himself was also given a home at Dartington when he came to England in 1938.

By the time Laban came to Britain there was already interest here in his ideas on dance and the study of movement in different fields, and Lisa Ullmann, as a result of her teaching and entrepreneurship, had made many influential contacts in the world of education - *L.E.A. Advisors*, *H.M.Is*, *Principals of Colleges*, etc.. A 1941 *Ling Physical Education Association* inquiry into "the possibilities of Modern Dance in Schools, Colleges and Recreation Centres" led to the founding of the *Modern Dance Holiday Courses* in the same year by Joan Goodrich, Diana Jordan and Lisa Ullmann. Their aim was

to provide a regular opportunity for teachers and others to experience and study dance based on Laban principles. They were held in the winter and summer every year for 20 years, about 100-200 students a time attending.

Several events were important in 1942. Through *Dartington* Laban had been introduced to the industrialist *Frederick Lawrence*, and in 1943 they produced their report on *'Industrial Rhythm'*. Laban was also engaged to give advice on dance and movement in relation to Psycho and Art Therapy at the recently founded *Withymead Centre*, near Exeter. Also Lisa and Laban moved to Manchester, where they linked up with Sylvia Bodmer, an early student of Laban, who was already taking dance sessions for local teachers. In 1943 the *Manchester Dance Circle* was formed, offering dance primarily as a recreative leisure activity, and there was some interest from theatre people. Thus, by the end of the *2nd World War* there was a large interest group. But many people were being encouraged and attempting to teach with only superficial knowledge gained at evening classes and short courses. In 1945 the *Art of Movement Studio* was opened by Lisa in Manchester. It catered for people who wished to receive extended full-time training in Laban work in order to pursue different professional careers, in dance theatre, industry, therapy or teaching. *H.M.I* Myfanwy Dewey was an invaluable support.

In 1946 a group of teachers met and discussed the formation of a Laban society or association, and at the *Sheffield Modern Dance Holiday Course* in 1948 a Guild, with its own organisation, a definite Constitution, various grades of membership and a Membership Fee of £1 was set up, and became an umbrella over clustered individuals and affiliated bodies.

## Attitudes in the 1940s

These were heydays of interest in the Laban ideas and approach. What was so unusual about it? What attracted so many people? One must remember that people first encountered the Laban approach in a practical way and not through his writings. His first book in English was *Effort*, published in 1947 with Frederick Lawrence. His second book in English, *Modern Educational Dance*, a response to the needs of teachers, was not published until 1948. It contains the *16 Basic Movement Themes*, the basis

of his scheme for the dance education of children.

## My own thoughts at the time

Not only did Laban work have a special name - *Modern Dance*, *Creative Dance*, *Free Dance*, *Art of Movement*, but all kinds of people of all ages and abilities took part. They all seemed to enjoy it and be able to work together. It was for adults not children. It engaged the mind and not only the body. This was a strange phenomenon for me, a naïve 20 year old who had had classical ballet classes since the age of 5, taken the *R.A.D.* examinations and undergone a 3 year course for *Physical Education* teachers. I was a good all-rounder and enjoyed my time at *Bedford*, including Gymnastics, Team Games, Social and National dance and *Modern Dance* with Joan Goodrich. But DANCING has always been the love of my life, and one of my best friends at College, *Joan Carrington*, introduced me to the *Modern Dance Holiday Courses*, which we were allowed to attend with special permission when still students.

It was all so different from anything I had previously experienced. People wore all different kinds of clothes and mostly worked with bare feet. There were men and women, a lot of tasks working in small groups, and the Course culminated in working together with Sylvia Bodmer on a large group dance which I later came to know as a *Movement Choir* which finally seemed to crystallise out of a grand *melée!* One session with Lisa Ullmann struck a deep chord within me and made me realise that all movements have a shape and continuity and that there is more to dance than a series of steps and positions. From this moment and as a result of Laban's classes and talks I became more and more concerned to get to the bottom of what the *Art of Movement* was all about. Without this depth of understanding I felt I could not teach or answer adequately the questions of other people, such as my cousin Mary Archbutt, an *I.S.T.D. Examiner*.

## Questions for which I needed answers:

What does the title '*Art of Movement*' mean? Is it a form of dance, a dance style? Why is it regarded as suitable for children within the school curriculum? Is the *Art of Movement* the same as *Modern Educational Dance*, or is *Modern Educational Dance* a branch of the *Art of Movement*? Many people at the time seemed to regard it as the same thing and also synonymous with *Creative Dance*, *Expressive Dance*, *Free Dance*.

## Attitudes of school teachers:

Attributes such as 'imaginative', 'creative', 'involved', 'expressive', 'spontaneous', 'original' were approved of. Dance for children should be participatory not spectatorial. Teaching through demonstration was regarded as imposing. Learning specific dance techniques was disapproved of, in the belief that it might stifle the creative impulse and inhibit imagination. Improvisation was approved of, but kinetic ideas, such as movement contrasts, should be used and not literary or emotive ideas, such as fairies, animals, fear, etc. Theatre performance was disapproved of. Dance could be performed, but only peer groups, parents and friends should be invited. Aesthetic criticism of the artistic value of work produced should be avoided. Technically trained bodies tended to be negatively called *balletic*. *Educational dance* and *theatre dance* must be kept strictly apart. Ballet was unsuitable for 'ordinary' children.

I didn't feel I had much in common with most of these teachers. They often seemed to make fun and not be serious when given tasks. Many of them had poor bodies, no technique, had never danced before, and did not seem to mind this or try to improve. Being mainly concerned with the practical experiences of dance, I also went to Sigurd Leeder and Lilla Bauer's classes in London and had auditioned for the *Jooss Ballet*. The school teachers were concerned with how *Modern Educational Dance* should be taught, gaining the approval of *Advisors*, *Inspectors*, *Heads of Schools*, etc., and how dance could be justified as a curriculum activity. It was the time of '*child centred*' education with stress on choice, problem solving and discovery methods.

"A society subject to rapid and accelerating social change demands people who are dynamically adjusted, flexible and able to adapt, rather than those who have merely been trained in

*good habits. Education must put more stress on problem solving of all kinds: in the social, ethical and political fields as well as in science, mathematics and the rest."*

Prof. W. D. Wall, *The Enrichment of Childhood*

## Attitudes of the Dance Establishment:

The rapid growth of interest in *Modern Educational Dance* in primary and secondary schools was regarded as an economic threat to dance classes in the private sector. It was frowned on for having German connections and links with mass movements and nudism on the Continent. Its technical base, if there was one, was difficult to understand, let alone examine, and a challenge to the arts *Academies*. Another threat was that the Laban people seemed to want to be independent. Their focus on the study of movement underlying all styles of dance as well as movements in other spheres appeared to be all absorbing, as if the Laban people wished to make themselves of prime importance.

Most Labanites largely ignored the established dance world and only had sights on the new approach. They were not interested in stage dance or performance. The *Ministry of Education*, on the other hand, debated whether support should be given to *all* dance establishments, and the context in which *Modern Educational Dance* should be taught, i.e. as part of a *Physical Education* or an *Arts Programme*.

When the *Art of Movement Studio* opened for full-time training in 1945 there were just four private, fee-paying Diploma students. One of these was *Hettie Loman*, who remained for five years, joining the staff, becoming the Director of *British Dance Theatre* and one of the only two choreographers trained by Laban in Britain. Later the other was Geraldine Stephenson. Private individuals studying before the *Studio* opened included Jean Newlove and Betty Meredith-Jones.

## Laban's idea for 'the Guild'

Laban's idea for the Guild was that it should embrace a mixed group of people - "*professional and stage dancers and teachers, teachers and leaders of community groups, members of clubs and associations, and people with special interests and training - such as in drama, industry, therapy, etc.*". When the Guild was first formed it had this breadth of membership, although by far the greatest number were teachers.

Difficulties were to arise after a few years. With its various grades of membership, Professional Members (Fellows, Graduates, and Members), and non-professional Members (those interested in Laban's work but without qualifications), the Guild wished to be regarded as *the* standards organisation and professional qualifying body. However, there were fundamental objections to a Guild Board being involved in examining full-time Diploma students of the *Art of Movement Studio*. Relationships between the Guild, *Laban Centre* and *Art of Movement Studio* became clouded, and in the 70s and 80s Guild Membership began to fall dramatically. It was also a time of much more rigorous academic scrutiny of ideas and practices and many political and financial difficulties for Colleges and all Arts establishments.

But through the on-going fascination with the implications and potential applications of Laban's movement analysis and other ideas, through the hard work of the *Guild Council* and recent Chairmen and Presidents, and, in my view, above all through the inspired editorship by Gordon Curl of the *Guild Magazine*, *Movement and Dance*, with its lively artistic presentation and range of stimulating, thought-provoking articles, the *Laban Guild* has survived to flourish again in the 21st century and celebrate its *Diamond Jubilee*.

## Sally Archbutt

### Further Information and book List:

Guild Archive at the NRCDC  
Lisa Ullmann Archive at the NRCDC  
Sylvia Bodmer Archive at LABAN  
*In Just Order Move* by Prof.F.M.G.Willson. Athlone Press 1997  
*Concepts in Modern Educational Dance* by Betty Redfern, Henry Kimpton 1973

# The Beginning of the Laban Guild

Dr Geraldine Stephenson reminisces



two people dropped out at the last moment. *We were there in Sheffield – January 1946.*

I shall never forget those Sheffield days. People of all ages, shapes and sizes. It was fantastic; I revelled in it all – and there were even some MEN! (we had none of those at Bedford!). In addition to the varieties of movement, I loved the group formations and patterns ... mainly directed by Sylvia Bodmer. Her style, of course, was very different from that of Lisa or Laban – this was something else I learnt ... there were so many ways of 'dance communication'!

During this exciting Course the people were talking about the fact that there should be some sort of organisation which we could all join – even people abroad – and that there would be more opportunity to meet people interested in Laban's work – experiment with this and learn more about it.

Towards the end of the Course, it was announced that there would now be the formation of an organisation called **The Art of Movement Guild**. This raised *great* applause and everybody started to join and become members.

I was, and am, so proud to have been there on that occasion. I cannot imagine that it was 60 years ago!

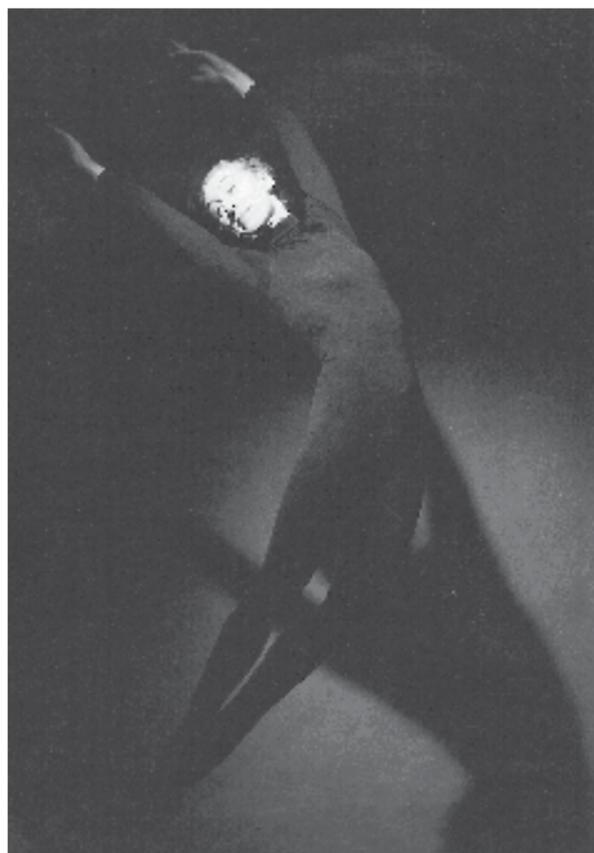
*Geraldine Stephenson*

When I was four-and-a-half years old my mother took me to a dance class because I was so shy and would not speak to any other children. It seems the situation changed and by the time I left *Hull Newland High School* (at seventeen-and-a-half) I had been to various dance teachers and had learnt aspects of *Ballet, Greek, Character, Tap Dance* and *Ballroom*

Rather than go into the Army (it was then 1943 and the War was still on) it was suggested by my School Games Teacher that I went to *Bedford Physical Training College* to become a P.T. Teacher. I was not sure which was worse – the Army or Physical Training! However, when I was told that some 'very interesting dance' was being taught at Bedford my future was decided and my dear parents heaved a sigh of relief.

I stayed three years tackling the *Bedford PT College* but what fascinated me was the DANCING! It was different from anything I had done before. There were no *pliés, développés* or *arabesques*. We improvised with our bodies and legs and I remember doing a lot of *twisting, flexibility, free flow and bound flow* etc etc. The teacher who taught all this magic was JOAN GOODRICH and I shall always be grateful to her. I learnt later that she had done some training with MARY WIGMAN (who was taught by, and danced with, Laban). Joan was able to develop this movement for the Bedford students. This I found FASCINATING ... and I knew that somehow I must continue with this.

At the end of 1945 (my third year at Bedford) Joan Goodrich told my room mate (Joan English) and me that there was to be a January Course of dance in Sheffield and that Laban and Lisa Ullmann would be there teaching and that whilst the course was full there might be two or three people who would 'drop out' and we could then join in. We waited with baited breath and



'Leaping'

# Tribute to Dr Geraldine Stephenson on her 80th Birthday

Dr Geraldine Stephenson - Choreographer:  
Laban's Influence On Her Work

*(Dr Janet Goodridge, former Principal Lecturer at Middlesex University, pays tribute to Geraldine Stephenson on her 80th birthday).*

"An explosion of dynamic and extraordinary movement hit me like a hurricane". This is how Geraldine Stephenson recently described her first experience of Laban training to me. She went on to emphasise that the subsequent teaching she had from Laban and his colleagues was "the influence on my work".

Although now celebrating and looking back on an amazing career in choreography for theatre, opera, TV and film, Geraldine did not set out to be a choreographer: "I had no notion of it". Her early background was war-time England in the 1930s and 1940s. Born in Hull, Yorkshire, she was taken to dancing class as a child to overcome shyness. But she says she was too frightened to enjoy the experience! She continued into her more confident teens, though described her dancing at that stage as "very stiff". On leaving school in 1943, she was encouraged to join the *Armed Forces*, but instead went to *Bedford Physical Training College*. This marked the beginning of Laban's influence, since something called *Central European Dancing* was on the timetable - relatively little known in England at that time. She described it as "the liberating of one's movement, with its emphasis on centrally generated body movement - so different from the ballet - full body use of the floor, bare feet, wide-ranging spatial directions, and the totally new experience of improvisation, partner and group work."

Geraldine has written of her experience three years later when she attended a week's course led by Laban himself: "The variety of movement expression, the meaningful nature of movement and the way one was so involved in the texture of movement ... it totally changed me and my perception of dance". Group work again impressed: "How wonderful to be part of a group that could shrink or expand, heave up and down; all of us breathing as one creature, to be in the centre ... on the periphery ... break away ... and interweave. (*Laban Guild Magazine* 1998, Vol. 17, No. 4). Her enthusiasm led her on to the new, *avant-garde Manchester Studio* staffed by Laban with Lisa Ullmann, Sylvia Bodmer and other colleagues, which was "throbbing with vitality and invention".

By 1948, Geraldine had begun some teaching at the *Studio* when Laban became seriously ill - an emergency! She took over his classes at *Bradford's Northern Theatre School* and after he recovered she continued teaching in the mornings, with the opportunity to observe his work later in the day. She recalls how Laban's emphasis on movement variety and contrast impressed her. For instance, in what he referred to as "high", "medium" and "deep" characteristics. She gave an example: "A group of 10 or 12 actors as

peasants - hoppy, jumpy, earthy - 'deep' dancers, exited into the wings and immediately re-entered, transformed, as aristocratic courtiers - 'high' dancers, heads lifted, elegant hand gestures". As in her own training, she also recalls Laban's emphasis on working expressively, systematically: "with the motion factors - time, weight, space, flow" which, together with the group and spatial work (shapes, patterns, directions), she has found to be an unflinching choreographic resource.



'Le Miroir du Couturier'

Around 1949, a heavy teaching schedule was proving exhausting, draining. Geraldine mentioned this to Laban, hoping for a reduced schedule. But his unexpected, characteristically wise recommendation was: "Gerry, make for yourself a solo dance recital". So of course she did. A creative change was even better than a rest, and a new phase in her life began. The recital, first performed in 1950 at the *Studio*, later developed into small-scale tours for a number of years, adding new dances. It was pioneering, independent work.

Despite her recital debut, Geraldine still had not considered choreography as a career until the following year when Laban offered her work on her first theatre show. This was for *Medieval Mystery Plays* in the ruins of *St. Mary's Abbey, York*, a Festival of Britain production. The performers were professional actors, *Bradford's Theatre School* students, townfolk and school children. It was an opportunity to put Laban's advocacy of dance for everyone into practice.

For this assignment, Geraldine was asked to design three sequences, including Lucifer's fall from heaven: a backwards, sideways, staggering progress down a long curving flight of stairs to hell - with dialogue! It was typical of actors' problems which she later became famous for solving. Laban's unique teaching about rhythm was particularly useful at such times, designing dance to co-ordinate with speech, combining metrical steps with the free rhythm of words. Geraldine discovered she was also expected to direct numerous crowd scenes with 250 people, such as: *Raising of Lazarus, Entry into Jerusalem, Last Judgment* - no less! She was "really flummoxed" and sought Laban's advice. She still remembers his reply: "That is easy. Cut the group into two sets of 100, from each of these make three groups of 30, put the two spare tens together, halve the remaining 50 and you have nine groups. Plan it all with your Bradford students and have one or two lead each group". Perhaps "easy" for Laban, he was speaking from his considerable experience with large-scale opera, theatre and movement-choir performance in Germany, of a kind unusual in England. However, it all worked well for Geraldine, and she says she has adopted this procedure ever since, when faced with devising movement for a large group.



'University Student'

She found she loved the whole experience and realised choreography was what she



'Revolution'

wanted to do. She moved to London and was much in demand for her skill in using the effective group-work techniques and other Laban movement material. Work assignments in masques and pageants of all kinds followed, as well as dance in hundreds of plays for theatre, television, films and opera.

Geraldine can provide many examples of Laban's influence on her work. She spoke of how she particularly values his training in movement observation, for use in rehearsals and at other times.



'Tea at Sea'

She made an unusual application of this when asked to choreograph Taverner's Opera *Thérèse* at the Royal Opera House. Seated behind the composer at his first full piano play-through - a most challenging score, with few obvious clues for the choreographer - Geraldine said what really helped her was observing the tall Taverner's back-view as he played. She saw all the shades of meaning and expression she needed as a basis for her work conveyed in his back and shoulders: clear effort phrasing which she could use.

Whether designing dance for opera or plays, Geraldine told me she learnt from Laban always to consider the dramatic context first. Then to design dance to underscore the dramatic action, characterisation and relationships; taking particular care with what Laban called 'characters' supposed "inner attitudes of mind" and resultant effort phrasing. Although Geraldine studied historical dance with other teachers, Laban's approach to period style, again via study of inner attitudes and effort qualities, was once more a prime influence. With an actor and a musician, she devised and toured two *Dance/Music/Poetry Through the Ages* programmes. Also, for many years, she devised, choreographed and directed the popular London and touring performances of the *Johann Strauss Dancers Company*, in period style, with orchestra.

As Geraldine discovered in her early training, Laban not only aimed to extend students' movement vocabulary - spatially, dynamically - from exaggerated gesture through to tiny shadow movements and stillness, but also to provide performance experience in a wide variety of dramatic, lyrical, grotesque, rhythmic-dynamic, comic, tragic, everyday, or even ritualistic performance themes. This breadth of movement expression and thematic range has certainly been mirrored in her own work.

There are hundreds of examples. For instance, a dramatic, violent dance scene of servants' mockery of their mistress in Strindberg's *Miss Julie* (BBC TV); an easy-going, rhythmic Irish dance in a sunny field in *Barry Lyndon*, the Warner Bros film; an extended comic, swinging "Keep Fit" routine for *The Two Ronnies* (BBC TV); lyrical waltzing in *All's Well That Ends Well* for the *Royal Shakespeare Company*; a ritualised entry for the court in *The Duchess of Malfi*; and a mysterious, grotesque dance of tempters in Havel's *Temptation*, (both for the National Theatre). She has choreographed numerous festive ball and other dance scenes with characters' interplay, such as in *War and Peace* and *Vanity Fair* (BBC TV), and a flowing forest-glade *Farandole* in *As You Like It* (also BBC TV). In contrast to all these and many others, an example of complete stillness at the end of a BBC TV series of Shakespeare's History plays. After the warfare with just 20 minutes to the end of filming, the Director made a surprise request for "a pile of bodies", a final tableau to include a hysterically mad Queen Margaret and her dead son. This with a large group of actors and to be held for three minutes. How did Geraldine achieve this? "Through improvisation" - an important feature of Laban training, long before it became standard student fare and also seen in performance work. She says she gave the actors an experience of quiet, sustained movement, "almost like a ritual" as, one by one, from a distance, they gradually moved in and attached themselves, in utter silence, to the slowly forming group. All held position and then the camera work began.

Geraldine's words, and I hope the few other comments which I have been able to include, serve to indicate at least something of Laban's influence on her work. But I consider this is truly seen at its most obvious when she is rehearsing, working with performers, drawing effective, expressive movement from them. More than five decades of a life in dance, swiftly responding to the needs of the moment, and always sustained by her Laban training: "I owe it all to Laban".

## Janet Goodridge

Note: Revised from material first presented in the USA at a *Society for Dance History Scholars* conference, and from an article first published in *The Dancing Times*, September 2003.



Finale from *Kaleidoscopia Viva*  
Presented by the Laban Guild at the Royal Albert Hall 1970

## Lorna Wilson Reminiscences - on the early days of the Guild

(Lorna Wilson trained at Bedford College of Physical Education with Joan Goodrich; also at the Art of Movement Studio and Dartington College of Arts. Lorna (a choreographer) was Head of Dance at Chelsea College of Physical Education 1955-77).

Recollections of events sixty years ago, however momentous, do not come easily. Many are hazy and tend to be inaccurate, especially those overshadowed by the War. The first year of peace, 1946, offered hope, a time for renewal, for innovation - a time when people with common interests were drawn together. It was in this climate that the Guild came into being.

Towards the end of the Annual Summer Dance Course that year, members were asked to gather in the hall. Would it be for a special Laban Lecture? Perhaps a run-through of the movement choir? No, it was for a proposal by Lisa Ullmann for the formation of the Art of Movement Guild. Laban was there, also other staff - Joan Goodrich and Diana Jordan. Many people signed on then and there, but a few of us were doubtful about the title 'Guild' which was reminiscent of the Townswomen's Guild or City Guilds of Master-Craftsmen, for example Goldsmiths and Silversmiths. Our Guild was for meeting, sharing, for promoting interest in the art of movement and for dancing together - the latter being important in Lisa's view.

A distraction for me at the 1946 course was concerned with music for dance. A small group of pianists were given talks on the subject, with piano examples by Adda Heynssen - Laban's and Lisa's accompanist. She asked me to be her movement illustrator which was challenging, as Adda tended to use old harmonies, irregular rhythms and plenty of loud pedal (nevertheless preferable to the thumping, intrusive accompaniment for dance today). Also in 1946 I was aiming to qualify for professional status with the *Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing - Ballroom Branch*. It was considered advantageous to be recognised by that highly-respected body. The syllabus required detailed knowledge in performance and theory of the four main dances; finally there was a stiff, exacting test in the presence of a stern-looking examiner. Pass - and a Certificate was awarded and the entitlement to A.I.S.T.D after one's name.

The achievement of set standards and the acquisition of qualifications were not part of the Guild's ethos in the early years. It was formed with the idea of being a fellowship - of generating a knowledge and appreciation of the art of movement whether in theatre, education or therapy.

Little did the first members imagine how the Guild would grow over the years. It must largely have been due to inspired and dedicated leadership. Another factor was the quality and persistence of contributors to the magazine, now truly informative and attractive. Also, the enthusiasm of members and success of courses and meetings country-wide, which counted immeasurably. Movement as an art has always been the Guild's priority unaffected by brash 'modernism'. It would please Lisa that we continue to dance together.

## Lorna Wilson

## Joan English Reminiscences

- on the early days of the *Modern Dance Holiday Courses* -

(Joan English trained at Bedford College of Physical Education with Geraldine Stephenson and taught dance at I M Marsh College of Physical Education).

Between 1943 and 1946 I think I was lucky to be in the right place at the right time. I was a student at *Bedford College of Physical Education* and was introduced to Laban's Modern Dance by Joan Goodrich. She was an excellent teacher, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and inspiring. She opened the door to a new world of dance in which the individual's movements and ideas were important. It was she who encouraged us to widen our knowledge by attending courses.

A *Laban Modern Dance Course* was held in Sheffield between December 28th 1945 - January 4th 1946. Four Bedford students attended this course: Geraldine Stephenson, Joan Carrington, Sally Archbutt and me. Although I did not understand the significance of everything we did, I thought it was a wonderful week and I was aware of the calibre of teachers we had. They included:

- Rudolf Laban - *Dramatic Dances*
- Lisa Ullmann - *Choral Dances*
- Joan Goodrich - *Descriptive Dances*
- Lilla Bauer - *Lyrical Dance*
- Diana Jordan - *Community Dance*
- Sylvia Bodmer - *Masked Dances*
- Betty Meredith Jones - *Occupational Dances*

I vaguely remember Laban teaching *Effort Studies* and something about 'habit hunting', but I cannot remember what that was about. Sylvia Bodmer was unforgettable. Her sessions were chaotic and yet she produced the most fascinating work. Those attending the course varied in experience, background and age. There were young students and quite old people. Some people came from a drama company, there were many teachers, and I think, a psychologist and an Hungarian girl.

One day there was a meeting about forming a *Modern Dance Guild*, and a School for Modern Dance in Manchester. Also I discovered there was a *Dance Circle* in Wakefield. On the last day we invited friends to see some of the work we had been doing and my lasting experience was that this was one of the best courses I had ever attended - but the building was freezing!

During August 1946 a number of Bedford students attended a Summer School in Chichester. It was similar to the one in Sheffield. Laban did something on *Dream Dancing*. Joan Goodrich taught a *polka* to music by John Field and Lilla Bauer worked with a *Brahms Rhapsody*. Diana Jordan used a quotation as her starting point - *Ezekiel Ch. 37*

"... the valley which was full of bones ... I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live ...".

That was an unforgettable experience!

Another unforgettable dance was a large group dance by Sylvia Bodmer about a flying bird. The whole group made the bird and I distinctly remember being part of its right wing. Perhaps some of these memories will remind others of those adventurous dance years!

## Joan English

# Toward the 61st Year of the Laban Guild

(Warren Lamb, as one of Laban's original pupils and subsequently a Trustee of the Laban Art of Movement Centre - not to mention a former President of the Guild - is well placed to put on record Laban's vision for the Guild and at the same time express with some authority his views on the Guild's future in the 21<sup>st</sup> century).

The Guild is the only institution to which Laban gave his name between his arrival in England and his death in 1958. He emphatically refused to award the Laban Diploma, an accolade much prized on the Continent in the years between the two world wars. Lisa Ullmann was no exception and when she formed the *Art of Movement Studio* Laban's name was absent despite the fact that he was involved in its formation and dominated the syllabus and teaching. It was Marion North, when she became Director of the *Art of Movement Studio* in 1973, who re-named it the *Laban Centre for Movement and Dance*. She tried to exercise a proprietary right over the name Laban and, for example, threatened legal action to try and stop the formation of the *Laban Institute of Movement Studies* in New York.

Laban did give his name, under pressure, to the *Laban/Lawrence Personal Effort Assessment*, then *Laban/Lawrence Test*, but withdrew it before his death. Other uses of his name have since been pursued around the world for a variety of interests. In academic fields *Laban Studies* is gaining momentum and this is probably a good thing.

A perspective on how Laban's name is used is appropriate at the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Guild. It is worth asking: has the Guild adequately fulfilled the responsibility of being the only organisation to which Laban himself gave his name?

Clearly, Laban had a special vision for the Guild. In my recollection, he mainly saw it as the custodian of the integrity of his work, duty bound to protect it, develop it, and maintain it in all its scope and potential.

That the broad scope of his work was important to Laban is apparent in the categories of membership which were announced when the Guild was inaugurated: Art, Education, and Industry. I asked about Therapy and was told it came under Education. Laban offered me an 'Art' and an 'Industry' membership. I responded that I was teaching movement in schools and did not want to appear unqualified. So I was offered 'Education' and 'Art' was withdrawn. A similar argument applied because I was performing with a dance group, was a member of the trade union *Equity*, and did not want it to appear that I had had no relevant training. It was explained that only Laban and Lisa could have all three categories of membership. I responded that I had no wish to put myself on a level with Laban and Lisa – could not there be some way of institutionalising their superiority while awarding all three categories to others who were qualified for them? After all, Laban talked of the 'common denominator of movement' and I, for one, believed that someone trained in Laban's principles of movement could make a professional contribution to Art, Education, Industry and Therapy, as I was doing. The outcome was that I did not become a member of the Guild until 1986.

It seemed to me that the Guild had difficulty in fulfilling Laban's vision and perhaps he himself was not a great help. The confusion of status with qualifications, together with the charismatic, guru-like figure of Laban and the outpouring of feeling for Lisa Ullmann, led to an organisation unsure of its purpose, though it left no-one in doubt that it wanted to honour Laban and Lisa. Many dedicated people, mainly from the Education field, worked hard to promote Guild activities but after Lisa's death in 1983, when Margaret Dunn was President, membership was in decline and Margaret Dunn suggested that the Guild should close down "having fulfilled its purpose".

At the time of its formation the aims of the Guild were stated to include:

**To establish the professional status of teachers and Art of Movement practitioners; To publish; To research.**

To what degree it had truly fulfilled its purpose is open to question. Fortunately, the very suggestion of it closing down evoked a surge of desire to keep it going.

## Publishing

An indication of the scope that Laban saw for the institution to which he gave his name was the promotion of a magazine launched in 1948 with an intended national distribution. It was called *Movement*, was edited by a professional, Benedict Ellis, and lasted two editions before being withdrawn. I was naïve enough to visualise it on a level with Picture Post, prominent on the news stands, with copies selling everywhere and making Laban a household name. Perhaps those who funded and administered this venture were equally naïve.

Indeed, naïvety was a shared failing at this time. Today, no-one looks to the Guild for anyone's professional status in Movement (with one possible exception, the qualification conferred by the *Leadership Training Programme*) and it is difficult to find any research projects under Guild auspices. However, the Guild magazine has been consistently published and offers a valuable record. Laban and Lisa Ullmann were regular contributors. The *Laban Lecture* at the *Annual Conference* was always published and includes a few notable contributions. I suspect that few outside the membership of the Guild ever read these magazines but they exist as an archive worthy of exploration by Laban students.

However, the magazine gradually degenerated into a homely, chatty form, akin to an *alumni* newsletter, symptomatic of the *malaise* which had persuaded Margaret Dunn that it was time to close shop. In recent years the magazine has been revolutionised by Gordon Curl. It is now something I feel I can offer to people outside the 'club' of the Guild. I hope I am still not naïve in pondering whether it could ever be launched with more hope of succeeding where, years ago, *Movement* failed. The challenge now is whether the Guild can generate the activity to justify the magazine.

## Recreational dance

The one area where the Guild does award a qualification, by means of the *Leadership Programme*, is confined to recreational and community dance. To be sure, this one area, if it takes into account the educational value, is extremely important. If the Guild achieved influence in this one area only it would achieve part (though part only) of Laban's vision when the Guild was founded. It has to be asked, however, just how respected has the Guild become within the whole field of educational, recreational and community dance? There is no evidence that it has a profile amongst members of the *Foundation for Community Dance*, for instance.

The event at the *Royal Festival Hall* in August 2003 promoted by *Laban Connect* provided an excellent model for what we should be doing to fulfil the purpose for which the Guild was formed. It seemed to me to be well attended and all the various contributions showed professional status. Jan Nicol, who was then Secretary of the Guild, and others, did a great job of bringing about this consortium of Laban-involved organisations but I doubt whether there has been much follow-up. Obviously, there are members capable of doing excellent work and are potentially able to break through into making *Movement Study* and Laban's theories about it known to a bigger public.

Alas, the 'public' touched by the Guild itself is very small and perhaps this is the reason why we lack the weight to follow up effectively any success. Of course, when Laban was around his

*charisma* provided a sort of inspirational weight which did attract an expansion and continuity of interest and encourage follow-up activity.

While the *Festival Hall* and other events show what good work the Guild can do there was an occasion in 2005 which I hope was not typical. I refer to the Annual Conference in Liverpool at which there were only about twenty people. If a new member had attended I do not think he or she would have been inspired. There were misfortunes; the heating did not work and the *Laban Lecture* could not be given because the speaker, Ken Bartlett, was ill. The video shown in place was interesting but showed that much was going on in the community dance field without any reference to anything derived from Laban. There was an inspirational element from Anna Carlisle, the new President, in her resolve to regenerate interest in the Guild. The *Phoenix Project*, reported elsewhere, is an example of the initiative she has already taken.

The afternoon of the Conference was depressing. One would hope that after 59 years the Guild would itself have people who could competently teach a class even if it was not inspirational. Maybe the classes were an exception to the usual standard of teaching. Everyone has an off-day. However, the experience cannot help but invite the question whether the Guild as an institution promotes a reasonable standard in what it has been primarily concerned with for sixty years – recreational dance. If it is justified to ask the question then perhaps there should be a wake-up call.

An invitation to make a response to some such call has come my way, suggesting that the old-timers who worked personally with Laban should jump into the fray and show how things should be done. As a member of that group I completely disagree. It is the members of that group who stand accused of any shortcomings in the functioning of the Guild. To what extent has the Guild invested in the future?

Are there younger people in the Guild who have the capability to take more initiative? If we could assume three generations, the age groups 25-40, 40-55, and 55-70, then the Guild will become more progressively alive if representatives from each group, and especially the 25-40's, become visible in taking a lead. Obviously, many young people join the Guild to enhance their social life, dance, and have fun. Suddenly to find yourself asked to take on awesome responsibility to further the aims of a *guru* dead for fifty years might be a bit overwhelming.

There could be an incentive to take on leadership responsibility, however, if it is promoted that there is a timelessness in much that Laban stands for, an immense potential in its development, that much is going on around the world either directly or indirectly in his name, and that the only institute to which he gave his name has a claim to be a world centre of Laban activities, helping to establish professional standards, encourage publications, and promote research. Data collection and analysis, aspects of research, require computerisation for which younger people are likely to be more creative. There may be both a prospect and an attraction in differentiating the Guild from the host of organisations which bring people together solely to dance. Laban offers a deeper meaning while still providing plenty of fun.

## Laban Studies

Laban would certainly like to have seen the organisation to which he gave his name recognised for more than recreational dance. His writings and lectures between 1946 and 1958 show a much broader interest. If an attempt is made to provide an umbrella professional category it could be philosophy. He was frequently referred to as the *Philosopher of the Dance*. It could have happened that *Laban Movement* became, for example, akin to Rudolf Steiner's *Anthroposophy*, or Laban might have become a cult figure like Gustav Jung. The Guild might have become similar to the *Jungian Centre* in Zurich with branches all over the world. I suspect that Laban himself had something like this in mind for the Guild when he gave his name to it.

In terms of this model, upon the death of the guru, devotees follow his preaching, subject it to analysis, contest different findings, publish different opinions, pioneer new applications and, eventually, some sort of consensus emerges. Then new studies are made only to be revised, developed, updated. All of this has happened but only to a small degree and the Guild is to be congratulated for its part. That it has happened at all, and is still happening, must surely give promise that it can happen to a greater extent, rather than just die out.

If Laban does mean different things to different people it is only to be expected, even welcomed. For Laban himself everyone was a dancer, even workers in factories, and in the early 1940's he called his methods first *Lit in Labour* then *Industrial Rhythm*. For Laban this was a distinct field, categorised as *Industry*, separate from *Art* and *Education*. The link with *Dance* had everything to do with people's rhythms and patterns of moving but little or nothing to do with dance performance or recreational dance. The stated aim of conducting research was typified by the work he did with psychologist Peter Carpenter in the mid-1950's, almost nothing to do with *Dance* other than his predisposition to see dance in everyone. His aim for the Guild specifically mentioned the "... professional status of teachers and art of movement practitioners" - nothing about dance or dancers.

I have to claim my own field of *Movement Pattern Analysis* as an exception to the dominance of dance. However, I make no secret of my interest in dance and if clients probe as to who Laban was they sometimes conclude "Oh! He was a dancer. It all comes from dance." They then have a picture of ballet, and it does not help my efforts to establish the discipline of *Movement Observation and Analysis*.

The profession which the Guild has served since Laban's death is primarily Dance. Its activities would be categorised according to the original definition as *Education* and not *Art*. But his influence, once at the core of Dance in Education, has virtually disappeared. Young graduates now struggling to teach are sorely in need of Laban's guiding concepts and principles.

The dedicated people who have served the Guild are to be congratulated on the many good things that have happened, especially in enabling it to survive, but should be reminded that their achievement is far from Laban's vision. He did not make it easy for successors to follow in his footsteps. He rarely made it clear where he was stepping but there is always recognition from people of younger generations who seek to find out what he stood for that, whatever it was, it has great significance. My suggestion is that we should aim to have a truly *Laban Guild* and not a *Dance and Movement Guild*. Can it be envisaged that the Guild might grow so as, eventually, to award a membership qualification in *Laban Studies*? This is not to say we cannot include dance at our meetings – on the contrary. But not in a manner that it dominates and makes our image in the eyes of the world as offering only an alternative to the tango or *hip-hop* or *Morris dancing*.

There is an organisation in the U.S. called *Motus Humanus* formed to enhance professional standards in *Movement Studies*. It organises annual round table conferences and advanced seminars. It has set up, for example, a rigorous evaluation procedure, carried out independently, for *Movement Pattern Analysis*. It has made seed grants for research projects and encouraged publishing. I cannot help but think it is following Laban's aims for the Guild more closely than the Guild itself.

Does the Guild, in its 61<sup>st</sup> year, want to begin to do something similar? It depends on whether there is consensus among the generation which currently runs the Guild and whether someone emerges from a younger generation to lead it.

The argument is for a Laban Guild promoting *Laban Studies*. Is this not appropriate for the only institution to which Laban gave his name?

*Warren Lamb*

# Questions for the Experts

## The Editor questions Vivien Bridson

(A quick glance at *Dancetheatreprojects* on the 'web', reminds us that Vivien Bridson has, for over forty years, performed, directed, choreographed and taught in England, Germany and America. Her *Workshops* - based on Laban's principles, and informed by contact with Laban, Jooss, Wigman, Holm, Cebron and Dudley, have gained her many accolades (as have her technique classes, direction and choreography. Professor Lutz Förster of the *Folkwanghochschule* in Essen remarks: "Vivien Bridson is a very creative, charismatic and accomplished teacher and choreographer with an overview of all aspects of theatre and dance" and Donald Roy, Head of Drama at Hull University, writes: "Miss Bridson's achievements at Hull were prodigious. I consider her to be a teacher and animateur of outstanding ability". Vivien's eight years at the *Art of Movement Studio*, followed by a wide variety of experience in education and theatre - plus a Master's Degree from Leicester University - provide us with some vivid insights into her thoughts and feelings in the answers she gives to the following questions posed by our Editor).

**Q1. You were trained in ballet for almost a decade, and, as a member of the *Manx Ballet Company* you were invited by Anton Dolin to dance in London with the Company. How do you look back on that ballet experience?**

In the Isle of Man of my childhood, dance was taken seriously. A former *Rambert* dancer, Monica Mudie, taught in all the Island's secondary schools, and offered extra classes to the talented, evenings and weekends. She was an unusual person, small, white haired, with a quiet, clear voice and the capacity to discipline all comers, boys as well as girls. She was also a very gifted choreographer using in addition to the classics, themes which had particular relevance to Manx folklore. She founded the *Manx Ballet Company* using dancers that she had trained. The company reached a high standard of performance and she received visits from eminent members of the ballet fraternity. Her teaching was in some ways orthodox, at least in terms of class structure, but we did not take exams, we danced. Monica Mudie made us all love to dance, she fed our imaginations, she required that we read, listen to music, think about art and ideas in general. She was formative in my early education and although I was an academic, if very naughty child, I gained more from her teaching than anything else. She educated openness and because of this when I encountered Modern Dance I found I enjoyed it, was stimulated by it.

**Q2. You gained distinction in all aspects of dance in your teacher-training at Birmingham University. Were you then resolved to become a dance teacher or a professional dancer/choreographer?**

I don't think I ever separated things out in such a clear way. Whilst I was training I attended *The Modern Dance Holiday Courses* at Ashridge which gave me a taste for something bigger. I loved Sylvia Bodmer's pieces. On the second of these Summer Courses I danced a solo for Laban. It was probably dreadful but he suggested I should try to become a dancer. That comment remained in my mind when I started to teach. Although I enjoyed teaching, it was not what I really wanted to do and I knew I needed more training. I auditioned for the *Studio* and received financial support from the *Charles Henry Foyle Trust*, and from William Elmhurst to study there from September 1960. I did not then realise that I would need many more years of training of a different sort, if I wanted to attain what was now my goal - to be accepted as a dance professional.

**Q3. For six years you taught at the *Art of Movement Studio*: Modern Dance, National Dance, Anatomy for Dancers and Teaching Practice Supervision. What are your most significant experiences of that time?**

Perhaps the most significant experience was when Lisa asked

me to work with her on translating some articles for the *Guild Magazine*. For the first time I realised the problem of translating Laban's complex philosophic thoughts so that they were acceptable in English. Although Lisa had several dictionaries we rarely found what she really wanted. She would explain some ideas to me through movement, then I had to perform. As all this took place in the kitchen there were numerous rather painful encounters with the gas stove! Only when Lisa was satisfied that I understood the idea we were working with in my body, did we begin to search for a translation. My German was very rudimentary so Lisa sent me off to cook for a Summer with a German speaking family in Geneva, and following that, some weeks assisting at a holiday for young children in the Swiss mountains. This was the beginning of my search through German writing of the early twentieth century, and Laban's major publications. *Die Welt des Tänzers* remains an inspiration to me and latterly to my students at the *Folkwanghochschule*.

Also significant is that Geoffrey Sutherland and I attended classes with Sigurd Leeder in the early sixties, before Sigurd went to Chile; also at this time Lisa invited Lilla Bauer and Lucas Hoving to teach Master Classes at the *Studio*. Robin Howard brought some of the *Graham Company* to visit and Lisa, although this was somewhat later, taught staff classes which were directed at enabling us to teach and train the young people on the 2 + 1 Course. From these experiences my wish to train professionally grew.

Working with the younger students was for me inspirational and I remember some of the work which they produced, particularly solos by Cindy Lewis and Helen Thomas, and a group dance inspired by a poem of Kathleen Raine. These were extraordinary and would stand up in any environment today. My own performance developed through working with the *Orchesis Group* (directors Mollie Davies and Mary Wilkinson) which toured schools and colleges. Later I formed my own group of former *Studio* students, following the same performance pattern. The *Guild's* Anna Carlisle was one of these dancers.

During these years, as all my work arose from Laban's principles I realised that they were indeed concepts whose meaning would continue to deepen in whatever circumstances I found myself.

**Q4. You took up an appointment in the *Drama Department* at Hull University in which for over ten years you taught not only dance but acting techniques, melodrama, documentary theatre and theatre-in-education studies - as well as directing productions. Your Head of Department referred to your 'torrent of teaching activity' and your 'prodigious achievements' as well your 'energy and resourcefulness, loyalty and commitment which never failed to inspire students'. How, as a trained dancer, did you achieve and apply such a breadth of theatre knowledge and expertise?**

When I took up my appointment at Hull I had a year's apprenticeship with one of the venerable teachers of voice and acting, Honor Mathews, whom Donald Roy, Head of Department had employed to teach acting in the Department. She set me on the road towards teaching acting and voice and thoroughly supported my attempts to build a dance group. Later, as a Lecturer in the Department I was a colleague of people who all directed productions in our *Studio Theatre*. Practical work was valued as a means of learning. The first productions that I was involved in were Aeschylus' *Oresteia* with Michael Walton, and Cocteau's *Wedding on the Eifel Tower* with Donald Roy, then came *The*



*Wakefield Miracle Cycle* with Harry Thomson. After that I was on my own to find my way of working with a text and directing a play in the *Studio Theatre*. As I was also responsible for seminars and lectures I had to read and read, but found the students and my colleagues so exciting that looking back I wonder why I ever left - however, that is another question.

**Q5. In the early seventies you studied with Kurt Jooss and Mary Wigman. This must have been both a privilege and a salutary experience: a) how salutary and how privileged? b) as pupils of Laban, how evident were Laban's ideas in Kurt Jooss' and Mary Wigman's teachings?**

Donald Roy asked me to deliver a series of lectures on dance in 20th century theatre and so I needed to meet those people who were still living and had contributed to the growth of dance. This was the beginning of a series of journeys across Europe and America and through this research I met Jooss and later Wigman. I have found that most artists of stature have a humility and wisdom which enables them to share their knowledge. Jooss who had a trip planned to Dartington, came to Hull as well. He delivered two open lectures to the entire University, and taught my dance students. Later he tried to help me with my choreography and also to understand concepts of *Eukinetics* which were different from the *Effort Study* which evolved in this country. This was indeed a privilege as was meeting Mary Wigman. She was blind but fully alive and what was impressive with her was her grasp of world events. She told me I should study with Hanya Holm, and this eventually happened.



Jooss and Wigman changed and developed what they had learned as students but both remained indebted to Laban's work. Jooss commented that Wigman had moved away from Laban in her middle years but had returned to his fundamentals as she became older. This was possibly also to do with the problems in their personal relationship. Jooss, as well as becoming an international prize winning choreographer, succeeded in developing Laban's work so that a training plan evolved which prepared young dancers for the professional theatre. This was put into practice and still continues at the *Folkwanghochschule* in Essen.

**Q6. After an invitation from Robert Cohan to study at the *London Contemporary Dance School*, you joined the staff for nine years at *The Place* as a teaching assistant and Rehearsal Director for Jane Dudley's productions. In your letter in this issue you refer to Jane as 'a feisty, emotional, and bitingly direct person, truly larger than life': a) what was the most significant artistic quality you acquired from Jane? and b) how do you rate her opinions on the question of "What makes a good dance?" as she expressed them in our last issue?**



Learning to work with Jane took a long time, and a short answer to this question is that she taught me to be honest, not to fear criticising young people in their quest for technique and ideas. I had to lose my tendency towards positive criticism, no matter how weak a student was, and try to give an objective comment, no matter how hurtful. Nothing other than 100% concentration was acceptable, people's habits and clichés had to be stripped away so that the young dancer was open to things which he or she may have rejected without this training. I learned this through first-hand experience - as from the beginning of my time at the school I was expected to attend classes every day. In the first year when I had leave of absence from Hull I also taught the second years "Improvisation for Choreography" which could have been a difficult situation but was possible due to the maturity of the students. When I returned to *The Place* two years later I mainly assisted Jane with her "Movement" classes.



In these she challenged the students to invent movement using a variety of starting points - anything from political comment to the sounds of nature. She also taught a series of classes, using the principles of Humphrey, Holm and Limon, to illustrate how movement principles remained constant, but different people handled their material in a way which interested them. The culmination of one year of classes was always a massive project involving all the first-year students, a hundred in number at that time. For a term the students worked creatively on different tasks until, after constant critical appraisal, they were ready for performance. Then Jane created a theatrical means of linking all the material, usually culminating in a massive group dance. The performance took place in the theatre and was one of the highlights of the school year. In order to support this work Jane asked me to build a "Dance History" and a "Film" Course. Together with a series of visits to Galleries and Performances I think we opened quite a few doors.



With regard to her opinions on "What makes a Good Dance?" I think most choreographers would agree with what she says, but would probably express themselves differently. However, there is a fashion at the moment for choreography (is it choreography?) which lacks structure and movement ideas and one comes out of the theatre bored, sometimes even angry at the waste of talent and lack of artistic content. Virtuosity is not enough although it can be spectacular.

In professional *Contemporary* training in England, things seem very confused. The students study *Graham*, *Limon*, *Cunningham*, *Contact*, *Pilates* *Body Mind Centreing* and so forth. *Laban Principles* seem to have been thrown out with the bathwater and all is chaotic. Even at LABAN there is very little which can be recognised as a training in his principles and practice.

At the *Folkwanghochschule*, the Dance Department founded by Jooss in 1927 has an almost unbroken tradition of "Modern" teachers who have come up through the European tradition. Hans Zullig and Jean Cebron both joined the school after Jooss returned from England, and both were still teaching when I first went to the school in 1989. Shortly afterwards, Lutz Förster returned from America and the *Limon Company* to take over the leadership of the Dance Department and continue dancing leading roles for Pina Bausch.

Although recognised as a University (*Hochschule*) in Germany, *Folkwang* is unusual in that its faculties encompass Dance, Drama, Musical Theatre, Music and Electronics and the training is towards professional performance.



One of my most vivid memories is aural! Walking round the campus, whose main building was an old Abbey, there are the sounds of music, singing, orchestral instruments, and the distinctive playing of the music for dance classes. Even on Sundays and late evenings the building was a hub of artistic activity. There was a sense of history, but also the evidence that the school was and is developing the talent of the future.

In an earlier question Gordon asked me was it a salutary experience to work with Jooss and Wigman; it was indeed a salutary experience when for the first time I taught in this school - which to me represented the summit of achievement in training with its basis in Laban's life and work.

**Q7. Your own teacher training took place a time when Laban's ideas were very evident in College Syllabuses and practice. Can you account: a) for the popularity of these ideas at the time, and b) their seemingly less popularity today?**



At that time many of the teachers in the Colleges were not so interested in the art of dance, as almost all of them came from a *Physical Education* background. However, what they achieved was to interest and excite their students and enable them to teach people of all ages. The resulting graduate students, although not particularly interested or able in performance, had a sound grasp of Laban's movement principles. In the intervening 40 years, starting with Robert Cohan's residencies in the seventies, an interest in performance was awakened and has developed, as has a body of academic knowledge, but now there is the problem that the teachers in the various strata of Higher Education have had no in-depth Laban training whilst in their own training they have sampled various techniques. They may have come across Laban through *Body Mind Centring*, but this is introspective in its approach. The challenge for people who understand Laban's principles is to find a way of making that knowledge exciting and indispensable to both students and their teachers.

**Q8. Mary Wigman, with whom you studied, was asked the question: "Do you consider that Laban's scales of movement could provide the training for the professional dancer?" To which she replied: "Laban's scales of movement are useful, but would not provide the training the modern dancer needs today". How far would you agree with Mary Wigman's view?**

I spent time with Wigman but would not say that I studied with her. She was blind and nearing the end of her life. Her last advice to me was to study with her master-pupil Hanya Holm, which I did.

Wigman, in her teaching, concentrated on movement "states", we would probably say "themes", and in each class she would go into a particular idea, for example "vibration". Although interested in space and dynamics, it is probable that she would not think it important to teach the *Eukinetik* and *Choreutic Scales* as such to her students.

**Q9. You studied philosophy at London University. Do you**

**consider that Laban's 'cosmic' philosophy has credence today?**

Two years ago I managed to get a copy of *Über Harmonie und Complication* by Dr Victor Goldschmidt, published in 1901 in Berlin. Laban refers to this book in *Die Welt des Tänzers*. The bibliography at the back of *Die Welt* is very short so I reckoned this book to be important. Reading it has changed the way in which I understood Laban. Yes, I do think his ideas have credence today but perhaps we all need to re-evaluate.

**Q10. Your Master's degree included a study of the "Development of spatial concepts in young children". Did you conclude that Laban's spatial analysis could contribute to such 'development'. If so how?**

When I undertook my Master's work, Piaget was very much in vogue, and my tutor, Professor Bantock thought it would be interesting to test out some of Piaget's observations through movement. I chose to explore spatial concepts. I taught two groups of thirty five year-olds for two years. One group had movement, followed by discussion and art work of some kind. The other had discussion and art work. Each group was tested with the *Terman Merrill Cognitive Tests* at the beginning and end of the project. The movement group increased their score by an average of 5 points, the control group remained constant; so, yes, using Laban's analysis did contribute.

**Q11. One of HM Inspectors for Physical Education wrote in 1956 that: 'A Research Department is essential if further investigation is to take place into the science that underlies so many of Laban's important discoveries. We are only on the fringe of a whole realm of knowledge'. Do you consider that enough has been done to investigate the potential of Laban's 'discoveries'? If not why not?**

I do not think that enough has been done to develop the potential of Laban's discoveries. However, conversely, I think too much has been done to try and justify the ideas in academic/scientific terms. What is missing is the development of a dancer's training so that the rich and flexible nature of the dancer's instrument is enhanced through this knowledge - but then, that has been my hobby horse for quite some time!

*Vivien Bridson*



## View from America

There is a story that when Laban was a youth he attended a festival in the Balkans at which a series of tableaux were shown. Laban thought how much more interesting it would be for the curtain to remain open and each scene connected with the next. Thereby his interest in dance was born.

I have had a similar experience at the annual *Festival of the Arts*, Laguna Beach, California. There is an event called Pageant of the Masters in a specially built theatre at which well known paintings are reproduced on the stage with live people depicting the characters. For example, *The Last Supper* would show Christ and all the disciples around the table exactly as Leonardo de Vinci painted them. The tableau is held for a few minutes and everyone applauds according to how they think it resembles the original but also according to how statuesquely still each person remains. If a slight wobble occurs then a muted groan emanates from the audience with a lessening of applause. How much more interesting it would be if the characters moved. A choreography of Christ and his disciples in movement would bring the representation alive.

Something similar, but without the game feeling attached to it, seems to be happening in Britain. TV programmes, especially on historical themes, illustrate the subject matter by having actors in near statuesque poses. For example, a programme on the *Wars of the Roses* showed actors, dressed for the part, in a castle setting, as King Edward IV's brothers, Richard, Clarence and Arthur, while the presenter narrated. They do almost imperceptible shadow movements then, for example, one of them turns his head in slow motion and looks at the other two. Presumably this is supposed to depict gravitas, or rivalry, or solemnity, or

something of the sort. I find it laughable. Even worse, the thirteen year old wife of the king is shown very dressed up holding her new-born baby, looking innocent, and trying to express motherly love without allowing more than a modicum of movement.

What are we coming to? To be sure, children have fun playing statues. But grown ups? And as part of a serious television programme? The *Laguna Beach* posers are amateurs doing a summer season game in which visitors like to participate. But the British television actors look so deadly uncomfortable in what is supposed to be a learned depiction of history. I would be interested to know what the actors feel about what they are required to do. And do audiences really think it is expressive and supports the narration? Perhaps the BBC does it because it is cheaper than having the actors act.

I suspect that having decided the dialogue should come only from the presenter the producers see no alternative to statuesque depictions. If the actors moved and did not speak that would be dance. God forbid! I am sure there are plenty of choreographers who could work with actors or dancers and achieve a much better result than playing statues.

It concerns me - is this part of a trend? If it is part of a stylised form of presentation which is growing in popularity I am worried. It seems to apply more in the U.K. than the U.S. We need someone high up in the TV world to have a similar experience to that of the youthful Laban.

*Warren Lamb*

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# Phoenix Project - the Enid Platt Legacy

(Anna Carlisle expresses 'the need for an intensive training course – a professional development course in Laban Studies which would generate a body of tutors with high levels of skill and expertise capable of applying Laban Movement Analysis to the current contemporary scene').

The idea for the *Phoenix Project* was generated several years ago when the Editor of this magazine, in the series *Questions for the Experts*, asked me to consider the nature, function and future of the *Laban Guild*.

The Guild's current activities were evident: the *Community Dance Leaders Courses* were an on-going success; the days of dance organised by *Laban in Places* were popular; the *Guild Council* was active and enthusiastic and the magazine had developed an exciting and wholly professional profile. In addition, *Laban International Courses* had recently celebrated a 50th birthday. Why then, was there such a static membership? Why were there so few young members of the Guild? Why was the body of Laban experts well over retirement age? In short, answers had to begin with the question. *Did the Guild have a future?* More pertinent still, *did Laban's seminal work in England have a future?*

The answers to these stark questions are many and various. What they urgently pointed to was the need for an intensive training course - a professional development course in *Laban Studies* which would generate a body of tutors with high levels of skill and expertise capable of applying *Laban Movement Analysis* to the current contemporary scene. The way to go indicated a 'headhunting' exercise - a personal invitation to professionals well known to myself - or highly recommended by others.

The conception of the *Phoenix Project* was of course, very straightforward: its realisation, inevitably, hard work. Yet the organisational pieces of the project fell seamlessly into place over summer and autumn of 2005.

Sixteen professional practitioners were invited to participate in the Project. Together, they would constitute an interesting international group of dance artists, theatre practitioners and teachers. Highly qualified, they would come with a wide variety of backgrounds and varying degrees of experience in *Laban Studies*. By December, we had fourteen practitioners on board with only two unable to commit to the lengthy timescale. By January, with an application from a highly experienced theatre practitioner, our number had swelled to fifteen.

Supported by the recommendation of Professor Richard Cave, Head of Theatre at *University of London Royal Holloway College*, *Phoenix* launched into action at the *Boilerhouse Theatre*, Royal Holloway campus, 2nd - 5th January 2006. An exciting start to the New Year! Further support and interest is evidenced by grant aid from *Lewes College* in East Sussex – the location of a number of our weekend sessions.

*Phoenix* is designed to run into 2007 and will be predominantly taught by two distinguished Guild tutors, Dr Geraldine Stephenson and Walli Meier.

From the conception to the launch, support has been both consistent and enthusiastic. Sincere thanks must go to Julie Sparrow, Jan Nicol and Ann Ward for their help at the inception of the project. Walli Meier, Geraldine Stephenson and Janet Whettam were instrumental in the late stages of *Phoenix*. Special thanks must go to Gill Hibbs and Ann Ward for major planning and organisational help and to Gill for on-going administrative assistance and a calm and cheerful attitude when responding to periods of stress and mounting panic on the part of the Director. A final and most important vote of thanks to the *Laban Guild Council* for their unanimous agreement to generously underpin *Phoenix* with grant aid from the *Enid Platt Legacy*.

Watch this Space for reports on the *Phoenix* rising!

*Anna Carlisle*

President

## PHOENIX PROJECT PRACTITIONERS

Amanda Banks: England  
Dance Graduate - *London School of Contemporary Dance*.  
Professional dancer, choreographer, teacher. *Dance Artist in Education*. Brighton



Catherine Bullen: England  
Graduate - *Royal Academy of Dancing*. Freelance dance artist working for the *National Dance Agency 'DanceEast'*, Suffolk. Community work with an age range 7 - 70 years.



Juliet Chambers: England  
Postgraduate - *MA Somatic Studies - University of Surrey*. Currently lecturing at *Rose Bruford College and East 15 Acting School*. Essex

James McBride: America  
Graduate - *MUDRA (Bejart)*. *MA Dance Studies - Laban Creekside*.  
Dancer, choreographer, teacher. Copenhagen



Dick McCaw: England  
Theatre practitioner



Michelle McCullagh: Ireland  
Dance graduate - *Laban Creekside*. Dancer, choreographer, freelance teacher. Dublin

Mai Scremin: France  
Professional dancer, choreographer, teacher. Currently training in *Feldenkrais*. Paris

Mira Sievert: Germany  
Postgraduate - *MA Somatic Studies - University of Surrey*. Currently engaged in doctoral research - application of *LMA* to *Indian Kathak Dance* Brussels

Linda Higgins: Ireland  
Graduate - *RAD*. *MA Dance - University of Limerick*. Principal: *The Dublin Ballet School*. Studying *Feldenkrais* and *Tai Chi* Dublin



Johannes Kamp: Germany  
Actor, Director, Teacher - Movement and Voice. Currently working in Theatre in Education. Trained in Dance Therapy. Cologne

Fumiaki Takana: Japan  
Postgraduate - *MA Physical Theatre - Royal Holloway College University of London*. Movement teacher: East 15 Acting School. *Alexander Technique* teacher. London



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Watch this Space for reports on the *Phoenix* rising!

*Anna Carlisle*

President

Irma Kort: Holland  
Professional musician. Solo oboist - *Concertgebouw Orchestra*, Amsterdam. Research:- application of Laban's theories to the performance, composition and teaching of music. The Hague



Dawn Turner: England  
Dance graduate - *University College, Chichester*. Dancer, performer, choreographer. Currently training in *Shiatsu*. Brighton

Uma Mather: Wales  
Postgraduate - *MA European Dance Theatre Practice - Laban Creekside*. Freelance dance artist and practitioner in North Wales.



Cathy Washbrooke: England  
Dance graduate - *Laban Creekside*. Currently engaged in *MA European Dance Theatre Practice*. Freelance teacher - dance, drama & performing arts. Hertfordshire



# The American Invasion 1962 - 1972

## 'A story ... that should be told!'

- 'fascinating' – 'beautifully told' – 'unique archival masterpiece' -
- 'a revelation' – 'overwhelming sense of history' – 'vividly retrieved' - 'dramatic' -
- 'much generalisation' – 'provocative' – 'biased' – 'wrongly titled' –
- 'far too long' – 'derogatory' – 'serious omissions' - 'unfolds like a drama' – 'invaluable archival material' – 'intriguing story' - 'essential viewing' -



(These are a few of the remarks made by our mini-reviewers of the DVD produced by Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Luis Espana. Introduction by Valerie with notes on the film's 'raison d'être'.)

## A brief note on making the DVD: *The American Invasion 1962-72* by Valerie Preston-Dunlop

The Archive at LABAN was the happy recipient of a gift from Dorothy Madden of all the materials on her professional career in the USA and her copious overseas residencies. They include her period in Britain and provide documents from which it is evident that she played a significant role in bringing *American Modern Dance* practice to this country. While the beginnings of the *London Contemporary Dance School* and *Theatre* are well-documented this earlier "invasion" with its involvement of *Dartington College of the Arts* and *I M Marsh College of Physical Education* is not. I found myself asking "Is there a story here that should be told? Who else was involved?"

I decided to research the period and to locate people who had been taught by Dorothy without having any clear idea what I might find. As you would expect, the story was complex. It exposed the significance of Ruth Foster, the vision of Robin Howard, the powerful teaching of Graham technique by Flora Cushman, Dorothy's more eclectic and creative methods and the effect of it all on Laban-based work. More broadly it exposed the problems and opportunities in dance education and training that were faced at the time and that have influenced where we are now.

I approached film-maker Luis Espana and together we set out to make a short documentary. It has turned out to be a long documentary. The first shooting was set in motion with students and faculty of 1962 from *I M Marsh College of Physical Education*. Finding the students was not simple and Hilary Corlett's knowledge of the *PE alumni* world was invaluable as was Ida Webb's knowledge of the role of the Principals of the *PE Colleges* in getting Dorothy over. The second shooting was set up with people Dorothy taught at summer schools at *Dartington Hall* around 1965, almost all lecturers from Colleges teaching dance. I contacted the dancers from *Maryland University* who came over with Dorothy and three of them gladly returned to take part. The third shooting was at Dartington where Peter Cox's interview exposed the need for me to find Flora Cushman and to expand the story to 1972. That meant setting up a fourth shoot

at *The Place* with Robert Cohan and the current choreographers who started their careers as students at Dartington.

What was in place in the UK when the "invasion" occurred had to be put and how much footage should be given to setting the scene was an issue I had to face. Sally Archbutt and Gerard Bagley were most helpful in supplying stills of their part in Laban-connected theatre work but I had to find moving images of children dancing. You would have thought that an archive somewhere would hold films of the dance in the *West Riding* but no one could find it. I had hoped to find images of Joan Russell's work with children but the *NRCDC* just could not spare the time or the financial resources to look for it or at it. I located the *Ministry of Education* film in an archive in Australia but luckily Hilary Corlett found a copy in an archive in Dorset. Lorna Wilson had film of the Dartington courses and the Dunfermline film of Lisa Ullmann would give a good record of her dynamic teaching. I needed moving images of American work and communicated, in New York, with the widow of the film-maker who directed *The Dancer's World*. She gave permission for one and half minutes to be available for \$1000. Dorothy's archive contained clips of her rehearsals at *Maryland University*. All these needed a change of format from 8mm film etc. to the modern computer-compatible format used to-day. Stills were needed of the people, places and activities mentioned in the interviews. Finding them was quite a search. Then every still, every bit of film needed copyright clearance and some required publication fees.

Luis started the painstaking process of editing from hours of interviews and I started the hazardous task of outlining the story that had emerged. It soon became clear that a continuity text would be needed to hold the bits together so the final screening took place.

Now it is complete one can look at what could not be included. A great deal more was going on in Britain during this period than could be fitted into this project. It raises a question that

might be relevant to the *Laban Guild*: should there be a more comprehensive visual presentation of the best of the *Modern Educational Dance* work? And the breadth of the work that came out of Laban's pioneering ideas and Lisa Ullmann's untiring promotion of it? Books exist but they cannot show practice. Archives exist that few visit but people respond to film. If it is to be done it must be soon while people are still alive who know and before film material decays.

Yes, film is expensive to make but if you believe that there is something that should be, and could be, demonstrated then the thing to do is to do it and do it well enough to attract funding. For

that you need a good film-maker and the goodwill of participants. I was thankful to have both and to get starter capital from a few generous individuals for *The American Invasion* and then borrowed enough to finish it. On completion the *Dorothy Witney Elmhirst Trust* have provided a very welcome £5000 grant towards costs.

So is there a need for more and who might undertake it?

*Valerie Preston-Dunlop*

## Mini-Reviews of 'The American Invasion'

(Rather than seek a single review of this important initiative, the Editor has invited short reviews by a number of participants and others in order to provide a wider range of opinions; it is hoped that this strategy will encourage further contributions on this critical phase of dance education in Britain)

### William Elmhirst

(son of Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst, Trustee and benefactor of the Art of Movement Studio)

This impressive DVD succeeds admirably in its purpose and speaking for myself I found it filled a void in my understanding after I resigned from both the *Dartington Hall Trust* and *The Laban Trust* in 1972. I hope that it will lead to a fresh assessment of the place of Laban in the history of movement and dance in this country and to an awareness of the need to help those aspects of his work which still remain to be fully recognised and supported. I have, since seeing the DVD, re-read F.M.G. Wilson's "In Just Order Move" subtitled "The Progress of the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance 1946-1996" and this encourages me in the belief that the *Dartington Hall Trustees*, for example, could learn from both this book and the DVD how the right relationship with academia can be reached while retaining the freedom that the arts need to be true to their calling.

### William Elmhirst

#### Peter Cox

(Arts Administrator at Dartington 1945-61, Principal of the Dartington College of Arts 1961-1983)

This is a fascinating story, beautifully told, a piece of singular dedication and one of great educational importance, tracing as it does several different streams of thought, aesthetic inspiration and energy as they grew and developed, interacted with each other and found new and more substantial institutional forms.

I found watching the film a nostalgic experience, being reminded of the aesthetic and educational issues we faced, of visits to *West Riding Primary Schools* with Ruth Foster and Alec Clegg, and meeting all those dedicated teachers of movement and dance who used to come to Dartington on Ruth's and Dorothy Madden's courses. Nothing could have given me more pleasure than suddenly finding Dorothy here on my TV screen, laughing and talking in her inimitable and unforgettable way. And how heart-warming to see those four former Dartington students looking so fulfilled as people, talking perceptively and with hindsight about what Ruth Foster's Resources classes had meant to them. I wished Ruth could have heard them.

At the end of the film VPD questions whether Dartington succeeded or failed in its mission. I think the answer depends on what Dartington's mission was at the time. The DH Trustees had already decided that its post-war policy for the arts was not to train dancers or other artists for the international stage; this was something they had agreed was best provided in a metropolitan

environment. What they were ready to do was to support a specialist arts institution with a very different and unusual kind of specialisation; one in which several arts, including dance, could be studied and practiced side by side, each in depth and aiming at artistic excellence, but with every opportunity for the participants to interact with the other arts and other cultures, and with human, social and environmental issues. This being their aim, I think Ruth's course for Teachers of Dance and Drama can be said to have been genuinely successful and her ability to analyse issues helped her successor to see her way forward: i.e. to continue supporting the study and practice of dance but within the context of an Honours Degree in Theatre.

### Peter Cox

#### Hilary Corlett

(Lecturer/Principal Lecturer I M Marsh College of Physical Education 1955-67; trained at Bedford College of PE and the Art of Movement Studio. Principal Lecturer at Chelsea CPE -1980) This DVD reveals some of the changes which have been effected in the post-war years in dance in education and dance theatre in England.

The DVD has been created through the combined expertise of Valerie (indefatigable researcher) and Luis (film-maker par excellence). Extracts from the filmed interviews of 28 people have been cleverly inserted by Luis - together with existing film, private cines and photographs. Valerie's informative commentary holds the visual and verbal contributions together.

#### Tribute to Dorothy Madden

The DVD pays a long-overdue tribute to Dr Dorothy Madden (Maryland University) – the first brave pioneer from the USA contemporary dance to invade English Education in 1962-3. She was much criticised at the time for her technique-training approach. However, after seeing more of the work with the five students who returned with her in 1965 - demonstrating and performing her own choreography *Widows' Welk*, together with her brilliant teaching at Dartington and of composition developing from a technique approach – we learnt how wrong we had been!

#### A Revelation

It was a revelation to me - as to other ancient Labanites I suspect - that Ruth Foster (former Staff Inspector), although enamoured of Martha Graham technique, has maintained her beliefs in some of Laban's ideas. We learn that in her retirement she had established a training course for Teachers of Dance and Drama. She herself taught a component entitled Resources. It was intriguing to find from the interviews with Contemporary Dance Artists, who had attended the course, that Resources had been Laban-based and that they now used this approach in their choreographic workshops today.

Valerie and Luis are to be warmly congratulated on creating a unique archival masterpiece – one which will be of tremendous interest and value to researchers, dance artists and to those teaching dance in Education, as well as to aspiring young dancers.

*Hilary Corlett*

### June Layson

(Trained in Physical Education and at the Art of Movement Studio; lecturer at IMMarsh College of PE from 1960; gained PhD whilst lecturer and Director of Dept. of PE Leeds University; the first University Professor in Dance Studies at the University of Surrey 1989).

The information on the back of the sleeve is immediately ambitious, interesting and pioneering! 'The American Invasion 1962-72' is a provocative strapline but it would have been more informative to precede it with an unambiguous title such as 'Dance'.

#### The Three Sections:

This DVD provides an overwhelming sense of 'history in the making' – not least by several contributors who are 'legends in their own lifetimes'.

The use of eye-witness accounts gives authority to the events being described; they also highlight the many contradictory strands in the chaotic and fragmentary development of dance during this period. Overall, there is a sense that matters of importance were happening, irreversible changes afoot and hitherto separate contexts were being merged and re-created anew.

#### Immediate after-thoughts:

A highly important yet neglected and/or forgotten area of the growth of dance in the UK has, in part, been vividly retrieved. It generates many questions - not least is the consideration of 'the authoritative voice'. Clearly one of the underlying themes of the DVD is the role of PE and whether it provided benign or inhibiting contexts for dance in education. Initially PE facilitated, as the DVD illustrates, but thereafter various tensions arose. The commentary takes a somewhat negative stance on the subsequent part played by PE without producing the evidence or systematically setting out the arguments. Further, more detailed and probing research is essential if this innovative and exciting period is to be evaluated stringently and fully understood. The two producers are to be congratulated on taking the first vital steps in this process.

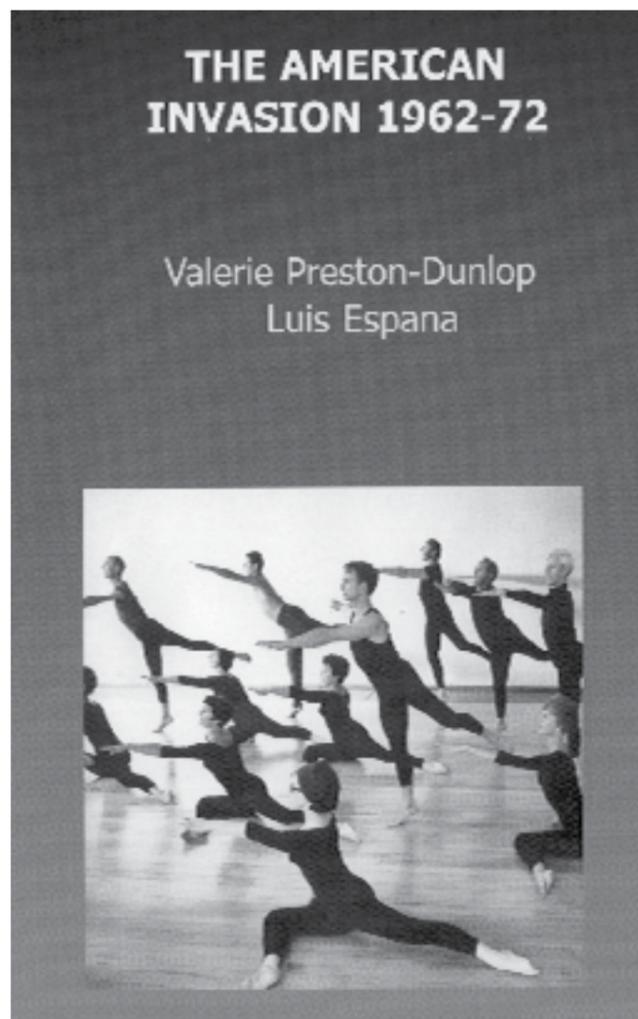
*June Layson*

### Sam Thornton

(Trained in Physical Education; Lecturer at Bretton Hall 1965 and at the Art of Movement Studio 1970. Co-Director with Susi Thornton of Laban International Summer Courses - LinC - 1985 to date).

The film 'The American Invasion' presents a calm account of a turbulent and passionate time. I recommend it as essential viewing to anyone interested in dance history in Britain during the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

In 1962 American Contemporary Dance on the one hand and the Studio and PE Colleges on the other, were pursuing totally different goals. The former was focused on performance and the professional stage, the latter on child-centred education. As shown in the film, it was impossible to develop a training course which would accommodate both approaches. We are shown the split that occurred. Laban's theatrical legacy had not got



off the ground in England. His theories, successfully taken into education and teacher training, were no match, later, for the excitement engendered by the technique and training derived from Horst, Madden, Graham and her followers. Talented youngsters were given the opportunity to see themselves becoming dancers.

In 1962 I was Head of the PE Department in a boys' Comprehensive School in Hackney, a desert as far as dance was concerned but I was also a member of Orchesis, a dance performance group that took a Laban based dance programme into schools and colleges. From 1965 to 1970 I was in Yorkshire and an active member of the West Riding Movement Study Group. Here dedicated teachers were inspired and encouraged to develop and find ways to share their love of dance with their pupils and students and were much influenced by the spirit and practise of Laban teaching. From the WRMSG came Choreos, another dance performance group, with material arising both from improvisation and careful choreography. Influences arising from Dorothy Madden's Summer School began to be seen in some of the dance pieces. I joined the staff of the Art of Movement Studio in 1970. Even though I was involved in dance for the whole of this period I was unaware of most of what was happening behind the scenes. I am pleased to learn, at last, something approaching the truth.

Valerie is to be congratulated for this dispassionate identification of the forces which precipitated the changes that occurred. It is a privilege to hear from so many well known influential figures from the major PE colleges and others who have carved out dance and theatre careers, to learn more about those creative Dartington times. The inevitable changes were painful for many. I learned things from this film about events which even after thirty years cause my hackles to rise, due to exclusion from knowledge that directly affected my future.

This is invaluable archive material and Valerie Preston-Dunlop deserves thanks for achieving such an amiable review of such a contentious situation. Luis Espana's filming and editing makes a significant contribution to the accessibility of the venture.

*Sam Thornton*

### Jennifer Holbrook

(Dance training at the Art of Movement Studio and Dartington College of Arts; Lecturer/Senior Lecturer in Dance in several Colleges of Higher Education).

The vision of Ruth Foster and Robin Howard in recognising the significance and potential of American Modern dance is revealed.

The issues were clear. Could the Laban based dance work offered in the colleges provide the intensity of training not only in technique but also in the traditional principles of artistic construction? The answer clearly was 'negative', not only for a student who wished to consider a teaching role in secondary schools or colleges, but also to pursue a career as a dancer.

What was to prove seminal to the future of modern dance in Higher Education was the invitation to Dr Dorothy Madden to teach at the I.M.Marsh College of Physical Education in 1962. Why Dorothy? - the recognition by Ruth Foster and Marie Crabbe<sup>1</sup>, during their 1961 visit to America, that Dorothy's eclectic approach to dance, rooted as it was in her own dance background which ranged from Wigman to Humphrey and crucially Louis Horst, produced dancers.

Dorothy was admirably restrained when discussing her appointment which was less than diplomatically handled. What the film confirms is the appreciation by former students of the technical discipline of Dorothy's classes which, in turn, helped improve their performance. A fact which Lorn Primrose, Head of Dance Department, conceded. The inclusion of Dorothy's former University of Maryland students in the making of this film was valuable for the insight gained into her Ph.D. choreography 'The Widow's Walk', in particular, Kenneth Rinker's exposition of the 'Harpoon Dance' and the use of a prop in choreography.

The Dartington American connection<sup>2</sup> was finally re-established when the first of three summer schools, taught by Dorothy and organised by Ruth Foster, was held in 1965. It was also where Robin Howard communicated his vision of founding a centre for the training of professional dancers in London.

A glimpse of Margot Barber at the piano reminded one of some inspirational accompaniment to technique classes. 'Contract and release, spiral and return, suspension and fall, pliés and dance walks and leaps' became part of the daily classes. The technical discipline, which many found to be difficult, nevertheless provided the basis for choreography where, as Sam Thornton vividly stated "Creativity is not just a splurge. The task will trigger the mode, build and colour the form". The range of choreography work inspired by the other modern arts, from music to poetry and sculpture, always received constructive comments and, if necessary, corrections, from Dorothy, which added in the words of Lorna Wilson, 'Refinement and polish'.

<sup>1</sup> At that time Principal of I.M.Marsh C.P.E.

<sup>2</sup> Through the vision of the Elmhursts the first American connection was made in the 1920's / 1930's

*Jennifer Holbrook*

### Sally Archbutt

(Sally Archbutt, trained at Bedford College of Physical Education - following ballet training - went on to become Principal Dancer,

Notator and Co-Director of: British Dance Theatre, Hettie Loman Theatre and Co-Director of Croydon Dance Theatre, Contemporary Dance Theatre Centre, Toynbee Hall and Centre for Dance and Related Arts, Croydon. Sally studied Kinetography with Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Albrecht Knust and was Head of Dance at Nonington College of Physical Education).

The documentary is about the search by Modern Dance teachers in the 1950s in Britain for a route to the acquisition of bodily dance technique. Disappointingly, I found the film biased, wrongly titled and too narrowly conceived. Whilst taking my hat off to the author for her work in seeking out and interviewing such a great number of people, I found her own commentary too opinionated, and her derogatory remarks about Physical Education and the Physical Education Colleges in Britain ignorant and unnecessary. Apart from the Elmhursts<sup>1</sup> at Dartington, the PE Colleges were the first to introduce and continue to support Modern Dance ideas and approaches from the 1930s onwards - notably of course those stemming from the ideas of Rudolf Laban.

In my view the film concentrates too much on the amazing influence of one HMI, Ruth Foster, one PE College Principal, Marie Crabbe, and one American Modern Dance exponent Dorothy Madden, who they invited to teach in Britain. Including many short interviews with lecturers working at the time (mainly in the PE Colleges!), and a few dancer/choreographers trained on the short-lived dance course at Dartington, the film nevertheless reveals very little about dance as an art, or deep educational issues. It also ignores such important dance technical aims as versatility and safety.

I find the film sad in that so many people ignored classical dance knowledge, and Laban's extension to this knowledge, and were visually and kinaesthetically hoodwinked into adopting the technical style of one dancer, Martha Graham, who had evolved it in relation to training dancers to be able to perform her own personal style of choreography and reflect her personal rejection of certain classical dance training fundamentals. I can think of no other art where the practices of one artist have been copied so slavishly! Is dance peculiar in that the rhythmic impressive aspect of repeated movement can be addictive and have a hypnotic kinaesthetic effect?

*Sally Archbutt*

### Jaqueline Smith-Autard

(Dr Jacqueline Smith-Autard has lectured for over 40 years and authored 2 seminal books in dance education. The Art of Dance in Education (2002) presents a 'midway model' merging features from the professional and educational models. Such a model has become consensus for school dance in many countries. With Jim Schofield in Bedford Interactive, she currently authors CD ROM Resource Packs to further the study of professional dance exemplars in education).

In respect of the history of Dance Education in Britain, as yet, there is much that has not been recorded in either written or visual form. Hence any resource in this area is surely welcome. By focusing on the influence of American Modern Dance on Modern Educational Dance, the Laban model that was perceived as consensus in the 1950s and 60s, the authors of this DVD aim to fill in a little chink of this history.

However, in terms of accuracy and lack of a wider view, there is little that could be claimed of scholarly value in the historical accounting of the 'American Invasion'. Even this title is misleading since discussion focuses almost exclusively on just two Americans - Dorothy Madden a teacher seconded from Maryland University, and Robert Cohan, an ex-dancer of the Martha Graham Company who, through the auspices of Robin Howard, became the artistic director of the London Contemporary Dance School and Theatre. The latter account can be found in many other texts, of course.

Although it is questionable whether those who were not a part of the events will be able to follow the story as it meanders from one topic to another, some witness accounts especially those given by folk in their 70s and 80s, will become important testimonies for future researchers in this area. Hopefully, any such future researcher will be able to objectively identify other people and institutions that made equally important contributions to the development of Dance in Education and its relationship to Dance in the Theatre. Certainly, Ruth Foster's promotion of Dorothy Madden's approach in teaching American Modern Dance Technique and Composition to those of us who attended the long summer courses of 1965 and 1966 was very welcome (yes, I was there too!). However, the greater majority of us did **not** import such unsuitable content wholesale for work in schools and colleges. Rather, we reflected upon ways in which these components of dance might become absorbed into our programmes particularly in teacher training. It is surprising that the DVD makes no mention of Betty Redfern, who had emerged from the staff of the Art of Movement Studio to become a very influential leader in making the shift from the educational model - 'creative, self-expressive' dance - to the art of dance model with equally emphasis on performance (including technique but not the highly stylised Graham technique), composition and appreciation that demands a study of dance in the theatre. Arguably, in the decade focussed on in the DVD, Redfern and other critics of the Laban model had far greater effects on changes in dance education than either Dorothy Madden and Ruth Foster.

The important shift of 'dance as art education' and a much closer liaison with dance in the theatre occurred more through lecturers in Dance and Physical Education courses taking cognisance of both practical experiences in technique-based dance forms (not only American) and theoretical considerations presented at national and international conferences featuring home grown thinking practitioners such as Redfern along with arts philosophers including Louis Arnaud Reid, David Best, Peter Abbs etc.

Clearly there are serious omissions in the DVD. It remains too personal - therefore narrowly focussed and pays far too much attention to students from an extra mural dance club in Maryland USA and the teacher training course at Dartington College. There is much generalisation and over sentimentality, but more worrying are the claims made as to the exclusive 'invasion of Americans' resulting in transformation of dance in both education and the theatre.

If people can stand 110 minutes of talking heads, the DVD will certainly promote much discussion, many questions and differences of opinion - which, of course, makes the resource valuable for its own sake.

*Jacqueline Smith-Autard*

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### Warren Lamb

(Warren Lamb was a pupil of Laban's at the Art of Movement Studio in Manchester in 1946 when he quickly became a key member of the Laban-Lawrence Industrial Rhythm team. In 1952 he founded the Warren Lamb Associates, which he continues to run today using Movement Pattern Analysis to assess managers' decision-making styles. He has advised companies world-wide including Hewlett Packard and Saatchi and Saatchi. Warren was Trustee of the Laban Centre at Addlestone in the late 60s and President of the Guild in the 80s; he regularly attends its Dance Courses).

The conflict as to whether Laban's theories apply to Dance/Art or Movement/Physical Education is laden with much tension, and this DVD makes for dramatic viewing, at least for those in the know (probably a small and ageing population).

While a polarisation did exist it is oversimplified in this survey. We are told repeatedly that Laban stood for expressiveness and softness while Martha Graham personified technique and

discipline. In fact Laban could be a hard taskmaster; technique and discipline were certainly not absent from much of his teaching.

This is important because before The American Invasion of which Valerie Preston-Dunlop speaks there was a Laban inspired German invasion of America led by Mary Wigman. Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham (both mentioned in the script) and Paul Taylor (not mentioned) were influenced, as I can testify from my meetings with them in New York in 1952-53.

Indeed, Dorothy Madden - and it is interesting to learn about the pivotal part Valerie Preston-Dunlop claims she played - was a beneficiary by reason of having been a student of Hanya Holm, a pupil of Wigman. Her own practice of discipline will have found an echo in Laban. The concept of "expressivity" versus "technique", when oversimplified, exercises a tyranny. Why cannot we be expressive and at the same time work hard on technique? Laban was much too broad in his influence for him to be categorised as one or the other.

To be sure, Lisa Ullmann pursued a soft, child-centred approach, eschewing any objective of professional dance performance, and Laban found it expedient to give his support. This is only a small part of the overall picture. Valerie Preston-Dunlop appears to claim that only dance schools whose objective is to train professional performers are suited to training teachers.

Many in the field of educational, recreational and community dance will disagree. The argument is far from settled and the more it continues, with Laban seen only as the "soft" "expressionistic" option, the more difficult it becomes for Laban practitioners to take a lead.

At the end of this DVD it is stated that the first wave of the Dorothy Madden inspired American invasion (the fact that it is so often referred to as invasion or onslaught is revealing) ended in 1972 when Marion North took a bold decision to integrate it with Laban. Will there be a sequel?

*Warren Lamb*

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### Jean Carroll

(Dr Jean Carroll was trained at St Mary's College Cheltenham and at I M March College of Physical Education - followed by the Special Course at the Art of Movement Studio where she joined the staff. Jean took a joint honours degree in Sociology and Psychology at Bristol and her MA and PhD at Manchester in 'Womens' Studies' and went on to become Principal of Dunfermline College of Physical Education).

Valerie asked herself if there was a story behind the role that Dorothy Madden played in the so called American Invasion. She has certainly found a fascinating one. All narratives are, of course, interpretations of events from particular standpoints and at different moments in time. In spite of the many 'stars' who contribute to the film it remains Valerie's own interpretation and standpoint. I would like to make four comments:

1. The mixture of 'talking heads' and movement images helps to create a good pace for the narrative, which, however, is far too long.

2. The use of the word 'indigenous' with reference to Laban's work is problematic as that surely was a previous 'invasion' - a German/Central European one that supplanted the Swedish 'invasion' accompanied by social dances from many lands. The only dance that could be called 'indigenous' probably was that unearthed by Cecil Sharpe.

3. Although the film begins with the statement that Ruth Foster's notion of a clear track from school work to professional dance was required and ends with the assertion that it has been achieved, the film does not present evidence of this. There are

only shots of Laban's work in primary schools and there are no shots of any kind of secondary work. It is said repeatedly that discipline and technique were lacking. But many people's work, and especially Lisa's showed both discipline and technique - as did Valerie's own at that time.

4. At the beginning of the German invasion the colleges did not provide intake procedures or courses that attracted dance students, but the colleges amended these as the influence of the Studio spread. The dismissal of these colleges is surely unwarranted when most of the practitioners of Laban's work and, later, the American work, came from the colleges. A different film might argue that there would be no contemporary theatre dance today in Britain had it not been for the early support of the colleges.

Overall the film provides an intriguing story of the politics of power operating in the dance world. Let us hope that this is the first of many explorations and interpretation of dance history on film.

*Jean Carroll*

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### Anna Carlisle

(Anna Carlisle MBE trained in Classical Ballet followed by further training at the Art of Movement Studio. She was subsequently awarded an MA at Sussex University for her Special Study on Kurt Jooss' Green Table. Anna was Head of Dance at Lewes College, tutor-consultant at Sussex and lecturer in Choreological Studies at LABAN. She is currently the President of the Laban Guild).

This is a fascinating historical documentary dealing with a turbulent period in the evolution of Dance Education in the English State System. Highlighting the decade 1962 - 1972 and narrated through a succession of interviews, the prime movers and shakers of the era give a vivid and visceral account of the ways in which the emerging dance culture was thrown into disarray by the introduction of American Modern Dance techniques into the curriculum of the Teacher Training Colleges.

Constructed in three parts, the opening section, 'Pre-1962' outlines the burgeoning of Laban's 'Creative Dance' in the Primary School Sector. Some wonderful fragments of old film footage show primary school children in thrall to the freedoms of Laban's 'ausdrucksstanz' - and backed by the Ministry of Education, 'creative dance' looked set to be a winner - an educational initiative with real significance.

Yet we discover that its toehold was tenuous. Valerie Preston Dunlop points up a clutch of problems that were to bedevil its progression. 'Modern Educational Dance' had been given a

bizarre location in the school curriculum. Placed in the P.E. Department, the aesthetic aims and preoccupations of dance as an art form were unlikely to be realised by physical education practitioners. In addition, given the singular model of the Classical Ballet as the only familiar form of Theatre Dance in Great Britain at the time, there were no routes for gifted children into a Modern Dance profession. Was 'Creative Dance' already doomed then in a cultural climate which could neither support or sustain it?

The documentary unfolds into the 1960s like a drama. In search of solutions to the problems surrounding Dance in Education here, Miss Ruth Foster, HMI, turned to the USA. Modern Dance had already established itself as a new and exciting Theatre Art in America and hot from a conference in Washington, Miss Foster took a bold move. Miss Dorothy Madden, a dynamic young teacher from the University of Maryland, was invited to introduce American Dance techniques into the P.E curriculum at the prestigious I.M. Marsh College in Liverpool. She arrived, unknown, unannounced and unwelcome. The vicissitudes of Miss Madden's early English period can well be inferred from the interviews with ex I.M. Marsh students and the highly articulate Lorn Primrose. The perspicacious and humorous reflections of Miss Madden herself add substance to this retrospective and through film footage and interviews with her dancers and students, we are offered insights into her early choreographies and choreographic methods.

By now, we have relocated to Dartington College of the Arts in Devon. It is from this beautiful but isolated setting that the viewer is led into the final section of the 'American Invasion.'

The late 60's saw the birth of the London School of Contemporary Dance - dedicated exclusively to the work of the great American dance pioneer, Martha Graham. Finally the British public were to be introduced to Modern Dance as a Theatre Art. The influence of the American 'invasion' was beginning to spread and although the formidable Miss Foster, now in the role of Vice Principal at Dartington, designed a two year teacher-training programme for students to study Dance and Drama, it quickly became apparent that the influence of the inspirational Flora Cushman, Graham teacher par excellence, was leading the students towards performance rather than teaching ...

"The American Invasion" has a long running time - almost 2 hours - but it provides both an overview and a perspective on Dance Education during the decade which was to shape its future. Its focus rests inevitably with the influence of American Dance but it does raise some interesting questions around its effect on Laban's 'Modern Educational Dance'. Was it eclipsed by the American Invasion? Were there no voices questioning the suitability of the Graham Technique for primary and secondary school children? What if ...?

*Anna Carlisle*

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## Editor's Reflections on 'The American Invasion 1962 - 1972'

(The Editor is greatly indebted to those who have expressed their views so cogently in this issue on 'The American Invasion 1962-72', and of course, on behalf of the Magazine, to Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Luis Espana for having produced a wonderfully stimulating piece of research. Perhaps a few questions might be raised in relation to Valerie's retrospective production notes - if only in anticipation of much needed further research.)

In her 'brief notes on making the DVD' Valerie says:

'What was in place in the UK when the "invasion" occurred had to be put and how much footage should be given to setting the scene was an issue I had to face'

and she later adds:

'Now it is complete one can look at what could not be included. A great deal more was going on in Britain during this period than could be fitted into this project. It raises a question that might be relevant to the Laban Guild: should there be a more comprehensive visual presentation of the best of the Modern Educational Dance work? And the breadth of the work that came out of Laban's pioneering ideas and Lisa Ullmann's untiring promotion of it?'

Certainly this is a challenge the Guild should accept - given, that is, the kind of resources, skill and commitment displayed by Valerie and Luis Espana in the production of their splendid documentary film.

What then was *actually* in place in the UK when the ‘invasion’ took place? Was there, in fact, a *bigger picture* than that sketched in the DVD which would *radically alter its conclusions* – conclusions that: as a direct result of the ‘invasion’ by Dorothy Madden and her very able Maryland dancers (and other influences such as Ruth Foster’s initiatives), we now have (in Valerie’s words):

*‘a seamless progression from school through to the professional world and theatre that has been opened up for young people’?*

This is a sweeping claim in need of much verification, for is it not the case that the development of dance education and training in the UK is attributable to a *much broader spectrum of influences* than those suggested in the DVD – influences which have led to the present day picture in which we find there are over 18,000 pupils entered for GCSE Dance in 2005 at over 900 centres, and that the ‘numbers entered for A Level Dance are flourishing’ - with the integration of appropriate technique and the study of established choreographic works. But Valerie has thrown down the gauntlet to the Guild.

Most of us are aware that, prior to the period of the project in the 50s, there was a groundswell of creative child-centred dance in schools – predominantly attributable to the influence of Rudolf Laban and his colleagues, as well as to the dedicated staff in the teacher-training General Colleges, Wing Colleges, Specialist Arts Colleges (Bretton Hall, Trent Park), Specialist Physical Education Colleges (Anstey, Bedford, Chelsea, Dartford, Dunfermline, I M Marsh, Lady Mabel, Nonington, Ulster) and Advisers, Local Inspectors and HM Inspectorate (see Don Buckland’s article in this issue). But was it the case that this burgeoning dance activity was, in fact, ‘cut off’, or divorced from the mainstream of dance as a professional art form, as suggested?

### College Eclecticism

Having served on the staff of a Specialist Arts College in the West Riding (Bretton Hall – now an international sculpture park) for six years in the mid-fifties - where music, art, drama and dance students were taught and simultaneously prepared for teaching, it was the norm that music students would be immersed in an experience of creative music-making, music skills, teaching techniques - as well as assimilating knowledge of the great traditions of world-wide music. Similarly, visual art students coupled their first-hand creative experiences and technical competences in painting, pottery, sculpture and ceramics, with a knowledge of civilisation’s great artists. Drama students likewise drew upon a rich tradition of dramatic literature in order to inspire their own creative efforts and techniques in drama – absorbing what they needed from the world’s great heritage.

Dance, in turn, drew inspiration from the professional world of dance with its visiting dance artists, their master-classes, professional dance performances, school visits, dance residencies, dance theatre, film, dance history, dance criticism, dance aesthetics and dance journals – all these provisions ensured that there could be *no divide* between ‘dance as education’ and ‘dance as an art form’.

From experience of examining and CNAA validations in the General and Wing Colleges of Education, I found that they too could tell the same liberal story; similarly from twenty-five years teaching at Chelsea and Nonington Physical Education Colleges, it was evident yet again, that a planned eclecticism was prevalent. In addition to Advanced Dance Courses in performance (under the tutelage, variously, of Lorna Wilson, Sally Archbutt and Hettie Loman), there were second subjects in music, art and drama, regular visiting artists in music, visual arts, drama and dance (including Dame Ninette de Valois, Lucas Hoving, Jo Gifford, Douglas Kennedy, Robert Cohan, Dorothy Madden and her students and many more - seminars at the American Embassy with Merce Cunningham, conferences with Alwin Nikolais and Martha Graham and the national dance critics – not to mention an invitation to Kurt Jooss from Germany to provide a lecture-demonstration and a performance of *The Green Table* to capacity audiences at the *Congress Theatre* Eastbourne in 1966. These were strategies which would belie *any* notion that there was

somehow a rift or separation of dance education from dance as a professional art form.

Undoubtedly, the inspiration of *Dartington College of Arts* was a model to us all - with its high profile resident artists and art critics (Imogen Holst, Henry Moore, Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears, Sir Kenneth Clark, and many more) - all of whom helped to create an ethos at Dartington where Principal Peter Cox and his staff were able to achieve their aim (as he expresses it in his DVD review), where:

*‘... several arts, including dance, could be studied and practiced side by side, each in depth and aiming at artistic excellence, but with every opportunity for the participants to interact with other arts and other cultures ...’*

### ‘Dance Education’ and ‘Dance Training’

If the 50s were the heydays of creative dance in schools, then the 60s were the heydays of the ‘educational theorists’ (educational psychologists, educational sociologists and educational philosophers), all of whom invaded *College Education Departments* in preparation for the pending validation of BEd degrees and an all-graduate teaching profession. These theorists made themselves heard in no uncertain way.

Just imagine staff returning to their colleges from the stimulating *Dartington Summer Dance Courses* with Dorothy Madden in the mid-60s - imbued with the desire to stiffen up their dance teaching with added discipline and more specific technique. What more encouragement could they receive from the educational philosopher (to heighten their resolve) than that to be found in the memorable words of Professor R S Peters:

*‘... talk of creativeness is cant unless a child is equipped with competence; for he can have no skills with which he can exhibit his creativeness ...’? Ethics & Education (1966:57)*

And Peters added (after Whitehead) that ‘individuals have to pass from the stage of romance ... to a stage of precision when their interest is disciplined’ – by training!

But there were serious caveats from the philosophers about the nature of ‘training’ - caveats which would have gladdened the hearts of those dedicated to ‘free expression’, ‘child-centred’ approaches, and the wider perspective of dance education. Educational philosophers would warn us that a distinction has to be made between ‘training’ and ‘education’; they would insist that:

*“... ‘Trained’ suggests the development of competence in a limited skill or mode of thought whereas ‘educated’ suggests a linkage with a wider system of beliefs ...”* (my bold) R S Peters *Ethics & Education* (1966:32)

In terms of ‘dance education’, this alerted us to the dangers of any limited concentration on ‘training’ (whether in Graham technique or whatever), which, in isolation from the broader knowledge and understanding of dance as an art form, and its relationship to culture as a whole, would lead to unprincipled narrow perspectives.

*“We do not call a person ‘educated’ ” says Peters. “who has simply mastered a skill or who just has “know-how or knack”! ibid*

### The Dangerous Divide in Dance?

If there are dangers in dance ‘technique’ *per se*, with its possible divorce from a wider educational context, then perhaps there are equal dangers (as Valerie so forcefully indicates) in the rift between a purely ‘creative/child-centred’ dance approach (with its implied limited technical development) and the world of professional dance as an art form. But where might the onus lie (if at all) for any such an alleged divide?

Laban’s own view (as a former Director of numerous professional

Dance Companies in Germany) would seem catholic; his conception of ‘the art of movement’ we are told was germane to ‘ballet’, ‘pantomime’, ‘drama’, ‘social dancing’, ‘country or ballroom dancing’, ‘masquerades’ ... ‘and is implicated in all ceremonies and rituals ...’. On this account Laban would not seem to be responsible for any rift between educational and professional dance – until we read his well-worn statement in *Modern Educational Dance*, that:

*‘... in schools, where art education is fostered, it is not artistic perfection or the creation and performance of sensational dances which is aimed at, but the beneficial effect of the creative activity of dancing upon the personality of the pupil ...’*

Rudolf Laban *Modern Educational Dance* (1948:11)

Could it be that this is the *Achilles’ heel* which (allegedly) hampered the development of dance in education towards the claimed ‘seamless progression’ during the 60s and 70 and beyond? And was it not the case that some of Laban’s followers at the time adopted a similar doctrine of ‘creativity’ in their educational theory and practice? Certainly one or two influential text books in the 60s suggest that this might have been the case.

Valerie Preston-Dunlop, for example, in her popular (at least 7 reprints) *Handbook for Modern Educational Dance* (first published in 1963) makes no references in support of: theatre dance, established choreographic works, professional dancers or choreographers. Indeed, she says of ‘Dance for the 16-18 year old’ that:

*‘... the kind of dance created in the classroom is intended for the enjoyment of the participants and not, like theatrical dance, for the spectator ...’* p.170

And if there are those pupils who aspire to dance as an art form she adds:

*‘... (the teacher) can touch on the craft of choreographic form if the class is interested in the artistic side of the work or ...’* (my bold) p171

## Laban’s Concepts of Health

*(Dr Carol-Lynne Moore is a member of the Guild and currently lectures on the MA Programme in Somatic Studies at the University of Surrey and the Graduate Program in Laban Movement Analysis at Columbia College Chicago. Carol-Lynne is the author of ‘Movement in The Making and Beyond Words: Movement Observation and Analysis’ with Kaoru Yamamoto and is President of the Board of Motus Humanus).*

### Introduction

The *MA/Postgraduate Diploma in Somatic Studies and Labananalysis* at the *University of Surrey* was conceived as an academic programme with Rudolf Laban’s theories as core curriculum. Laban’s concepts were taught experientially in the dance studios at the University, and linked with experiential and theoretical exploration of emerging ‘somatic’ practices. This was a novel connection. At the invitation of editor Gordon Curl, I would like to explain what *Laban*, *Somatics*, and *Dance* have in common and what all three have to contribute to the health of body and mind.

### Linking *Somatics* and *Laban*

*Somatics* is the rapidly emerging field of complementary health practices such as *Pilates*, *Feldenkrais*, *Alexander*, *Trager*, etc. While practices differ, most combine movement and breath work with touch and manipulative techniques and aim to enhance

Joan Russell in both her books: *Creative Dance in the Primary School* (1965) and *Creative Dance in the Secondary School* (1969) espouses a similar creative/child-centred approach which *‘grows directly from (the pupil’s) personal movement expression ...’*

### The ‘seamless progression’

The ‘seamless progression from schools through to the professional work and theatre that has been opened up for young people’, would appear to have met many obstacles on its way – not least by those who systematically interpreted and elaborated Laban’s legacy. But the ‘seamless progression’ claim and the assumed manner of its realisation remain open to much further enquiry - and would need to acknowledge those who have developed and integrated much of Laban’s ideas with professional standards.

Our mini-reviews of *‘The American Invasion 1962-72’* have already thrown valuable light on the early days of dance education in the UK – not least on the contested priorities of technical training and the breadth of knowledge and understanding required for a *liberal* concept of dance ‘education’ - as well as the virtues (or otherwise) of a ‘participatory’ as opposed to a ‘spectatorial’ role for dance in schools and colleges.

Valerie’s excellent film, I suspect, was calculated to raise such issues – and this it has done admirably. It remains for others to follow her example!

*Gordon Curl*

**‘The American Invasion’ is available from  
Dance Books Ltd.,  
The Old Bakery, 4 Lenten Street, Alton, Hampshire  
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price £21.99 plus 75p postage.**

psychophysical awareness and functioning. The term “somatics” was coined by the American philosopher-turned-body-worker Thomas Hanna. In his view, somatics is the field that studies the *soma*: “the body as perceived from within, from the first person-person viewpoint” of the proprioceptive senses. For Hanna, the *soma* is categorically distinct from the *body* as it is typically viewed objectively from the outside, or third-person perspective. If science tends to look upon the human body as a material object, *somatics* is more interested in subjective and active aspects of bodily experience; that is how it feels to live and move corporally.

Labananalysis complements the somatic perspective by providing an objective framework for movement description. Laban’s work, however is more than just a taxonomy itemizing the elements of human movement. There is a psychophysical model of health inherent in Laban concepts, one that is fundamental to how he constructed the two broad domains of his taxonomy: the realm of *Choreutics* and that of *Eukinetics*.

Laban noted that “the dancer moves, not only from place to place, but also from mood to mood.” The movement from place to place addresses motion in physical space, the outer realm Laban conceived as the “kinesphere.” Movement from mood to mood deals with action in psychological space, the inner landscape Laban referred to as the “dynamosphere.” In examining how Laban’s taxonomy gives definition to each of these movement

territories, I hope to postulate links between body, soma, dance and health.

### The Kinesphere

In order to be able to notate a dancer's movement, Laban needed to be able to trace where movement flows in the space around the body. He visualized this space as being roughly spherical, defined by all areas that the dancer could reach without taking a step. Laban was able to give further definition to this movement bubble, or "kinesphere" by using the Platonic solids, such as the cube, octahedron, and icosahedron. The corners, edges, and inner rays of these solids create a sort of longitude and latitude for the kinesphere, providing coordinate points for mapping the trajectories of the dancer's moving limbs. This clever appropriation of solid geometry for the purpose of movement description has a lot to do with health.

In Laban's view, it is desirable for lay movers as well as dancers to have access to the whole kinesphere. There should be no physical or psychological impediment that limits the full three-dimensional range of movement. In order to facilitate range of movement, Laban designed a variety of spatial sequences or scales with which I am sure all Guild members are familiar. I would like to suggest that these scales are little "rehearsals for health," for Laban designed them to be symmetrical in form. Take the dimensional scale for example. The opening movement upwards is immediately balanced by a downwards movement in the opposite direction. A movement across the midline of the body is complemented by a movement that opens away from the midline, and so on.

The diagonal, transverse and peripheral scales within the kinespheric territories defined by the cube and icosahedron prescribe more complex but equally well-balanced explorations of the kinesphere. These sequences take the mover into "superzones," areas of the kinesphere that can only be reached through total body participation and coherent postural adjustment. Perhaps Laban's scales can offer an antidote to the increasingly sedentary lifestyles so many of us lead.

### The Dynamosphere

Laban's concept of the "dynamosphere" addresses the dancer's movement from "mood to mood." I have referred to the dynamosphere as the inner domain of psychological space. The intrapsychic flow of thought and feeling is invisible, of course. But in Laban's view, this inner stir can be glimpsed in the ephemeral play of kinetic energies, the flow of weight in time and space that we know as the four effort elements.

Just as the kinespheric axes are arranged in sets of opposite directions, Laban also conceived the effort elements as pairs of opposite "fighting and indulging" qualities. This pairing also bears a relationship to health. Again, Laban finds it desirable for dancers and all movers to have access to a full dynamic range, to be capable of being forceful as well as gentle, flexible as well as direct, and so on. The dimensional and diagonal scales with effort affinities provide more "rehearsals for health" by balancing fighting and indulging moods so that the dynamosphere may be as well rounded as the kinesphere.

### Dance and Health

The dance of health pairs the kinesphere and dynamosphere in a balanced and harmonious way, so that there is a full and rich range of motion functionally and expressively. Dancing is more than this, however. In a deep dance experience, the mover is plunged bodily in a *Bergsonian* experience of pure continuity; feeling and form flow indivisibly. This is the experience of the so-called "sweet spot in time," the magical moment when what the mind intends is matched by what the body accomplishes. It is possible to have this kind of "dance-like" experience in a variety of contexts - in sport, in concentrated labor, alone or with others. When this sweet experience of flow occurs in the company of others, it is amplified. I believe that Laban would

say that the deepest dance experience is neither narcissistic nor exhibitionistic, but social and participative. Feeling and form flow most powerfully when we dance together.

It should be clear that a lot of contemporary dance does not conform to these standards. Some dance forms encourage a distorted use of the body or engender a lopsided spatial or dynamic range. Much professional dance training and certain types of popular dance are not really sociable in the sense of requiring coordination and cooperation with other movers. Nevertheless, despite current shortcomings, dance retains the potential to be an enlivening and healthy social activity, perhaps even a profound one.

### Dance and the Idealized World

There is one final aspect of dance and its relationship to psychophysical health that should not be overlooked. This point was expressed quite eloquently by Athol Fugard in his play, *Master Harold and the Boys*. The play takes place in a tearoom in apartheid South Africa. "Master" Harold is the white son of the tearoom proprietors; the "boys" are the two black waiters. The waiters, both avid ballroom dancers, are looking forward to a big competition. When Harold suggests that there might be a collision of couples on the ballroom floor, the boys collapse in laughter, explaining:

*"There's no collisions out there, Hally. Nobody trips or stumbles or bumps into anybody else. That's what the moment is all about. To be one of those finalists on that dance floor is like . . . being in a dream about a world in which accidents don't happen."*

What Fugard is suggesting, and what Laban certainly recognized, is that dance awakens utopian fantasies. Dance creates a picture of the world the way we want it to be - a world in which everyone is graceful and coordinated; a world in which there are no collisions. When we dance, we enter this idealized world. And even if we only experience it fleetingly, this is a glimpse of what human life, *healthy* human life could be.

*Carol-Lynne Moore*

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# The National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) at the University of Surrey, the early years

*(Judith trained as a teacher at Nonington College, completed an MA at the University of Leeds in 1976, and a PhD at the University of Reading in 1998. She taught in schools and higher education from 1965 until 1982, when she was appointed to head the development of the National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) at the University of Surrey (UniS). Whilst at UniS, Judith also taught on both the MA and BA degree courses. In the early 1980s Judith wrote a six-unit correspondence course on the History of Ballet for the Royal Academy of Dancing Teachers' Diploma, for which she was an examiner for many years. In 1995, Judith received an award from the American organisation Congress for Dance Research (CORD) for services to dance research. Also in 1995 she was awarded a fellowship by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for a study trip to visit archives and university dance departments in Canada and the USA. Judith's PhD, completed after early retirement, was a qualitative-interpretive investigation of dance teaching. Currently, Judith serves on the editorial board of Research in Dance Education.)*

What follows is a personal perspective, some memories of the early years of the NRCD. Many people were involved, some staff, employed for long or short periods of time, and many volunteers, all of whom gave of their time generously, each playing an important role in the early developments. It is hard to decide which aspects of those early years to write about; my selection is based on a perception ten years later that something was significant either to the NRCD itself or in relation to dance education more widely, or that something may be of particular interest to Laban Guild members.

January 1982. The beginning: An empty room. An empty four-drawer filing cabinet, bookcase, and on the desk a single sheet of paper: the brief from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for the establishment of the National Resource Centre for Dance (NRCD) at the University of Surrey. My brief! Trained initially as a teacher, then after many years involvement in teacher training in higher education, I was appointed by June Layson, director of the dance developments at the University, to head the establishment and development of the NRCD. On that January morning it seemed a daunting task.

During the late 1970s, under the leadership of Peter Brinson, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (CGF) undertook a major survey of dance education and training in the UK. Amongst a number of key recommendations in their report (CGF, 1982) were the establishment of the NRCD and of a dance department at a UK university. Brinson's vision led to both these recommendations being located in one university in order that each would support and nurture the other. "Why Surrey?" some people asked. The reasons related to the development by Brinson of the International Choreographic Summer Schools at the university during the 1970s, and built on contacts already established by the Gulbenkian Foundation.

Initial funding for the NRCD of just over £20,000 from the CGF meant that ways of generating an income and/or finding further sources of funding guided thinking in the early months. A four-part strategy was devised

- to generate publications, especially to support the newly introduced dance examination syllabi (GCE, formerly GCE 'O' level, and GCE A level Dance),
- to run short courses for teachers,

- to develop an archive to support education and research, and
- to liaise with other organisations with similar interests.

It was hoped that the first two elements of the strategy would begin to demonstrate the income generating potential of the Centre whilst additional funding was sought; these objectives also drew to a large extent on my personal teaching and teacher training experience. The establishment of an archive was regarded as necessary if dance scholarship were to develop in the UK in the longer term, although it was recognised that the cost implications might make this area slow to develop. The fourth objective encompassed what today might be called "networking". Our first leaflet was published in October 1982 outlining our plans.

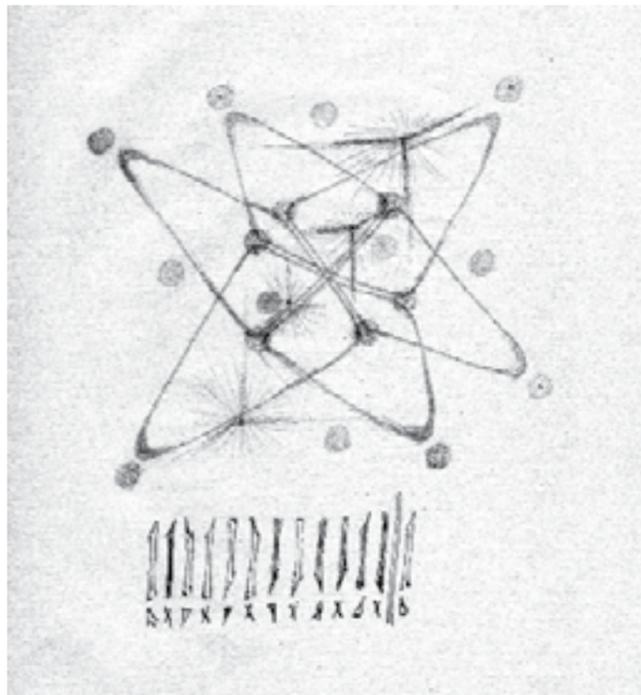
During the first couple of years, considerable time was spent in setting up contacts through visits to resource centres, libraries and archives in related subject areas, and in meetings with dance educators in tertiary and secondary education to discuss their needs. It was of particular interest that several of the major dance companies were beginning to develop their archives in the early 1980s, Rambert, English National Ballet and Royal Ballet, and each company was supportive of the NRCD's development, donating materials such as theatre programmes, fliers, posters and sometimes video. Since the responsibility of each company archivist was to his/her company and therefore they had little



Peter Brinson officially opens the NRCD in 1989. © University of Surrey. Used with permission.

space for researchers, they envisaged the NRCD as a public face and helped us accordingly.

A factor of particular relevance to the timing of the setting up of the NRCD was the growth in information technology. In 1982 word-processing was uncommon, databases almost unknown and digital images the preserve of the specialist. The purchase of an electric typewriter in the dance department was a cause for excitement! However, very soon there was a growing awareness of the potential of using computers not only for word-processing but also for storing text and pictures in databases. An NRCD document dated 1984 outlines as part of the brief: to establish a computerised database to provide information. A demonstration was held at the University with the help of the Computing staff and discussions were held with representatives from dance companies, the Theatre Museum and other arts organisations.



Drawing found in Laban's manuscript 'To Materialisation of Space'. Reference L/E/2/2 from the Rudolf Laban Archive, National Resource Centre for Dance. Used with permission.

Funding applications to develop a dance database were made but success evaded us until much later.

A further factor of particular relevance to the NRCD's development through the 1980s and 1990s was the growth of examinations in dance in the state sector of education; GCE 'O' level dance was introduced in 1983 (later titled GCSE Dance), followed by GCE 'A' level in 1986 with A/S level in 1990. These were obvious developments for the NRCD to support. In order to assist teachers, a programme of short courses was initiated starting in the autumn of 1983, and in the mid 1980s a summer school was offered biennially. Later, with the appointment of a teacher (for two days per week) as course co-ordinator, summer school became an annual event and the programme grew. The very first course for teachers left me with vivid memories. In 1983 there seemed few opportunities for teachers of dance to come together, and often there was little support for their efforts. We were greeted with such enthusiasm, such excitement and the sight of teachers, sometimes from schools or towns comparatively near to one another, meeting and sharing, often for the first time, their expertise and problems was very worthwhile. They assured us that they needed us and gave us lots of pointers as to the sorts of courses we should provide, but what they really needed of course was simply to talk with one another. The courses took place in different parts of the country, and offered valuable interaction between teachers attending and NRCD staff which was vital to our further development.

Work to produce published

materials to support the dance examination syllabi provided a clear sense of purpose. The NRCD created resource packs (usually text, photos, charts and sometimes video) on dances, companies and choreographers, collections of reviews and the Dance Current Awareness Bulletin (DCAB), a research tool which gave teachers and students the means of tracking down articles in recent dance journals; it also published information about new books and forthcoming courses and conferences. With the help of a grant in the 1990s it was possible to make all the data collected for the DCAB available on a CD-rom.

The dance examination syllabi required students to study a dance, e.g. *Giselle* (Petipa) or *Soda Lake* (Richard Alston). The first dance for which we produced support materials was Cohan's *Hunter of Angels*. A video of the dance was made by the University AV Unit under the direction of Cohan, and the education officer for the company and I created additional support materials. The video unit at the university found the challenge of recording dance exciting and responded to all Cohan's requests, one camera-person even sitting under a table to video one section because he wished to intensify the height and lighting effects on the ladder to heaven which Jacob and Esau ascend! Perhaps of all the resource packs with a dance work as their focus, the most exciting for me was the *Soda Lake* project which again involved making a video, this time under the direction of Richard Alston. *Soda Lake* is a solo piece and this fact contributed to our decision to produce a video which contained more than one performance of the piece thus making it possible, not only to study the dance, but also to study two interpretations of the piece. The analysis of the dance and other supporting materials were created by a young member of the NRCD staff and were very well received by teachers. The NRCD also invited undergraduate and postgraduate students to submit work and students from both Surrey and Liverpool John Moore's developed dissertation material into a form suitable for publication. From 1985 we also distributed material on behalf of other organisations, most commonly a dance company or an organisation such as Dance and the Child International (daCi). My role in relation to the publications programme during this period was to develop policy about what we might publish, to initiate preparation of projects, to guide other authors, to edit and in some instances to undertake the preparation of publications myself. During the period 1982-94 over one hundred publications (text or video) were created by the NRCD and many others simply added to our distribution list.

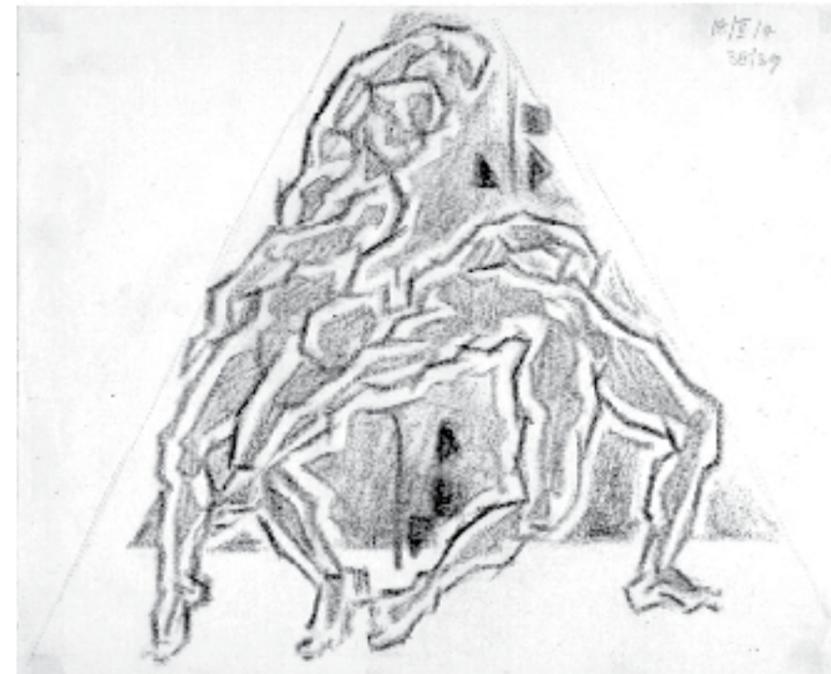
The archive strand of the NRCD's strategy encompassed plans that were wide-ranging and very long term. We had no money to purchase materials, to buy collections. All the money we could generate was spent on staff salaries and running costs, but I remember we had an acute awareness that, if dance scholarship and research were to be established and grow, records (in the widest sense) must be saved and made accessible to researchers/students. In the summer of 1981, hearing about the Gulbenkian Foundation plans to set up a resource centre at the University of Surrey, I headed off to the Dance Collection at the Lincoln Centre in New York. This experience, I hoped, would be helpful when I applied for a post at Surrey and this proved to be the case. The Dance Collection was indeed an inspiration, its achievements and leadership in the field



Judith Chapman (right) with Anita Heyworth, who donated Madge Atkinson's Natural Movement Archive to the NRCD, at the 1989 official opening. © University of Surrey. Used with permission.

outstanding and its staff most generous in their welcome to me. The initial plan for an archive outlined in a 1984 document was ambitious, and contained three elements. It indicated that, first, we intended to locate existing archive collections, which we did through the visits described earlier; that we would collate information about holdings in other collections so that this data could be held in the NRCD database, thus enabling the NRCD to act as a kind of referral point to documents held elsewhere. The enormity of the scope of this idea meant that it remained merely an idea.

Second, we indicated that we would encourage donations and bequests so that they might be made accessible to students of dance/movement. The archive grew like Topsy with generous donations of, for example, books, journals, photographs, theatre programmes, posters. Sometimes these came from individuals sometimes from companies or organisations. In some instances we were able to provide a home for the records of a group that had ceased to exist, such as Kickstart, Extemporary Dance Theatre, and Janet Smith and Dancers. The Natural Movement Archive, a gift from Anita Heyworth the former principal of London College, was an exciting addition during the early years. Occasionally, we received a phone call to tell us that someone was decorating their sitting room or moving house and that if we would like all their books and journals we could have them – if we were able to collect them. In the early years, our need to establish an archive was such that we were appreciative of all such offers, and usually tried to respond. We were fortunate to receive some historical treasures amongst the more everyday materials. As the years went by of course, we found we had to be selective and to develop a clear policy for acquisitions. However, initially it seemed important to establish a sizeable collection, partly to emphasise that here *is* something to be studied when one talks about dance study, and also to establish the richness of what



A drawing by Rudolf Laban for a face of the octahedron model. From the Rudolf Laban Archive, National Resource Centre for Dance. © NRCD. Used with permission.

there is to study, in terms of the range of materials in different formats.

The third element of the archive plan was to generate archive records where none existed in order to create a richer heritage about dance in the UK. A project that illustrates this third area was the oral archive project set up in 1984 in co-operation with representatives of the Laban Guild. The aim was to make

sound recordings of the reminiscences of individuals who had worked with Laban or Lisa in order to gather memories of their experiences of the work. Several officers of the Guild were involved, giving their time and expertise generously; training days were held during which we discussed interview methods, devised interview questions and practiced using our tape recorders. Considerable hilarity was evident during these preliminary meetings, not least when a member of staff titled the



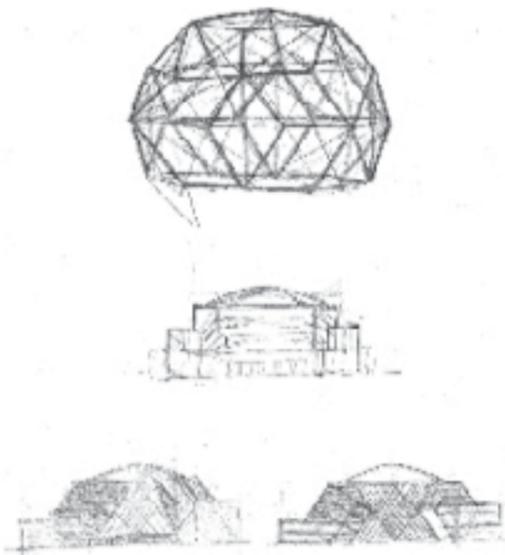
June Layson (left) and Ellinor Hinks (right) assemble an octahedron from the Rudolf Laban Archive at the NRCD. On each face of the octahedron, Laban drew two figures in poses relevant to that face. Copyright University of Surrey. Used with permission.

meetings O.A.P. (oral archive project) – fortunately no one took offence. When these interviewers went out to implement their plans, they gathered much valuable historical material, bringing their audio recordings back to the NRCD where they are now held (some 40-50 cassette tapes over the years). The memories recorded in the voices of the individuals who were "there", who were part of the Laban scene in the 1940s, 50s and 60s give a very special meaning and interest to the words that are spoken. The project fulfilled our idea of an archive as a "living archive".

Several archives of major national or international significance have been donated to the NRCD, and the Rudolf Laban Archive is one of these. This is the personal archive of Rudolf Laban which was held by Lisa Ullmann in her home. The archive, which records various aspects of Laban's work both in Europe and the UK, consists of several thousand original drawings and writings, theatre programmes, reviews relating to Laban's theatre work in Germany, journals and books. Lisa had visited the NRCD to find out about our work and had invited June Layson and myself to her home where the archive was held. Following her death in January 1985 the executors of Lisa's will decided that the Laban Archive should be given to the NRCD. At the request of Lisa a selection of the original drawings was given to the Theatre Museum in London for exhibition purposes. Copies of these are held at the NRCD. The NRCD was pleased to receive also the personal archives of Lisa Ullmann which were left to Ellinor Hinks and Athalie Knowles. Lisa's archive contains a great deal of material relating to the Art of Movement Studio as well as documenting other aspects of her life. The Rudolf Laban Archive and

Lisa's archive were sorted and a preliminary list made during the latter years of Lisa's life with the help of Ellinor Hinks, retired principal of Nonington College, Kent. After Lisa's death Miss Hinks continued for many years to work on the collection for one day per week at the NRCD, fulfilling the task that Lisa and she had set themselves.

These records, documenting Laban's life and work, were



Drawings by Rudolf Laban from the Rudolf Laban Archive, National Resource Centre for Dance. © NRCD. Used with permission.

enriched by donations from several of Laban's colleagues and pupils of their personal collections. Some were given during the person's lifetime, e.g. the Educational Dance-Drama Theatre Archive from Gerard Bagley; others were given posthumously e.g. Joan Russell Archive, the Audrey Wethered/Chloe Gardner Collection, the Betty Meredith Jones Collection. Past chairs of the Guild, Sheila McGivering and Anna Carlisle, also initiated an arrangement to deposit Guild records regularly at the NRCD. The International Council for Kinetography Laban made similar arrangements during the chairmanship of Ann Kipling Brown. All these collections complement one another and offer a rich source for study of the Laban-based work.

It was vital to find funding to preserve and catalogue the delicate materials contained in archives such as these. Early on, with a grant of £200 from publishers MacDonald & Evans, some of the very fragile theatre programmes in the Laban Archive were professionally copied and made available for research on microfiche. However, it was not until 1994/95 that substantial funding was obtained. In the late 1980s I had initiated discussions that eventually resulted in the move of the NRCD to be part of the university library. Initially this move brought the Centre into the Library for university management purposes, and later, in the

early 1990s, the NRCD moved physically into the library itself, space being converted for our use. Most significantly, bringing the NRCD under the auspices of the university library opened up sources of funding to us that would not otherwise have been available. Applications in 1994/95 to the libraries strand of the Council for Funding in Higher Education brought the first substantial sum of money and considerable celebration.

The donation of such historically valuable archives was in some senses an act of faith by the persons who gave them, faith that the materials would be conserved and catalogued and ultimately made available to others for study so that the particular area of work would continue to evolve. A particular sadness for me is that it took so long to obtain the substantial funding needed to carry out the necessary work on the archives that had been donated to the NRCD. During the early years the focus was on activities that generated some income to support the continuing existence of the Centre, and time was spent encouraging the building up of a collection. Some basic sorting and arranging of materials was carried out so that the many visitors to the NRCD could use some collections but it was not until 1994/95 that the funding referred to above was achieved. Applications written in September 1994 requesting funding from the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) were successful in obtaining a one-off sum of £110,000 and recurring funding for three years of £80,500 per year. This was used to appoint additional staff, including for the first time a qualified archivist in order to carry out preservation work on archive collections and to develop electronic access to collections. The move of the NRCD into the university library made possible this application for funding and enabled a massive development of the archives.

Throughout the period I describe the lack of funding was a continual issue, staffing from year to year was uncertain and sources of possible funds elusive. This was a period during which potential was demonstrated and an archive established. With the funding of 1994/95 a changing focus could emerge, involving professional work on the archives, whilst maintaining some, if not all, of the activities of the early years. What probably will never change is that funding and staffing will always be insufficient to meet needs, but perhaps any archive story is a story of survival. Following my partial early retirement from 1995 there has been much progress and information about current activities is available from the NRCD staff. It is amazing to see the transformation from the empty room of 1982 to the bulging-at-the-seams and well-organised collection today in the capable hands of manager, Helen Roberts, and archive and research officer, Chris Jones.

*Judith Chapman*

**Laban Guild Diamond Jubilee  
11th March 2006  
The University of Surrey, Guildford**

**Our annual day of dance in 2006 celebrates 60 years since the foundation of the Laban Guild.**

**Our theme will centre around Laban's Crystalline Forms. Celebrations will include:  
Movement Sessions led by Anna Carlisle and Wendy Hermelin**

**An introduction to The National Resource Centre for Dance  
by archivist Chris Jones  
leading to**

**An Exhibition of Laban's Choreutic Drawings**

**Suffolk Youth Theatre Performance produced by Michael Platt**

**A movement choir directed by Sam and Susi Thornton**

# Criticising Forsythe - Ann Nugent

Modernist thinking informs the way we look at dance, causing us to search for something essential and understandable. It brings expectations into play, and we go to performances armed with knowledge relative to the title of the work, and to the reputation of choreographer, company and theatre. When expectations are met cultural beliefs are reaffirmed in ways that feel comforting. This is a passive approach to watching.

Postmodernism, however, is concerned with changing attitudes and with turning away from what happened in the past. Creative artists who ally themselves to postmodern thinking feel a responsibility to break up the familiar and create difference. They challenge the role of the critic, and in the eyes of postmodernists everyone is a critic and expected to look proactively at work that breaks with the ties of tradition. William Forsythe is a postmodern choreographer whose work avoids the essential and understandable by questioning history and legacy. He alerts us to values that require different kinds of knowledge, building contemporary awareness into work that reaches across the cultural 'isms', from the 'a' of absurdism to the 'z' of Zen Buddhism - by way of brutalism, conceptualism, Dada, minimalism and more besides. His is a conceptual enquiry that offers strange links or, to use the jargon of postmodernism, radical juxtapositions that shake us out of our passive viewing habits.

In criticising postmodern art we do well to remember that there are no past models on which we can base a judgement of good or bad: rather we are invited to approach with openness and curiosity. Forsythe charges us with a need to search for what is *in* the work, rather than for what is, apparently, missing (which sounds obvious until we recognise how we cling to our old habits). The nature of what he does insists that we move away from the convention of negative looking - negative because of the way those expectations are



Photo courtesy of The Forsythe Company

guiding us - to search instead for associations, connections and relationships. There are certain to be links with many other disciplines besides dance, for this is work that invites discovery through a dance theatre of ideas and experiment. In such a context the term criticism needs to broaden, in a discursive sense, until it moves closer to the activity of appreciation.

The rewards to be found in Forsythe's work are widely acknowledged, and if proof of this were needed it became abundantly clear when in 2004 the Frankfurt authorities announced that they no longer wanted to support a company

as controversial as Forsythe's Ballet Frankfurt. There was outrage, eliciting well over a thousand emails protesting at the plight of Forsythe and his company. They came not just from the dance community but from creative artists around the world, all of them testifying urgently - and passionately - to the importance of Forsythe's work on the international scene.

Frankfurt's financial potentates had wanted a return to conservative values. True the name Ballet Frankfurt was probably misleading, producing connotations that would not be met, but Forsythe had inherited the name and a company that gave its first performances in 1945 and which had, over the years, achieved a sound but local reputation. In the twenty years of his directorship (1984-2004), he caused the Ballet Frankfurt to become one of the most sought-after dance companies in

the world. He turned his back on ballet's classics and, after including some seminal 20<sup>th</sup> century ballets in the repertory, put the focus on his own choreographic enquiry and an increasing deconstruction of history. This sent a ripple into the dance ocean. Forsythe might be mining the legacy of ballet but, far from imitating it, he was using it to discover more about the body's potential and its relationship with time and space.

When the Ballet Frankfurt closed it was a thriving concern. But though the city of Frankfurt is still waiting for the traditional company that it seemed to think could be had for the asking, Forsythe has moved on.



*The Room as it Was* with Dana Caspersen and Ander Zabalala  
Photo by Joris-Jan Bos

He brought his newly launched Forsythe Company to Sadler's Wells in the autumn of 2005 with a mixed bill.<sup>1</sup> Now the identity generated by the changed name comes from Forsythe's own reputation as a visionary who sees continuing possibilities for dance theatre to move forward. Most people going to performances know to expect controversy.

Some people, however, don't like Forsythe's work because it fails to measure up to what they think they have gone to see, and ten minutes into the first piece on the Sadler's Wells programme, *The Room as it Was* (2002), a middle-aged couple walked out noisily, with the man complaining, 'this is the most boring thing I have seen in my life'. If the pair had stayed the course of the four works, they would have been surprised to find themselves in the midst of a standing ovation at the evening's end, from an audience wanting to make known its collective enthusiasm for the performers and their choreographer.

But the couple who protested were not alone, and there were negative comments too from critics. Some were affronted that the programme only offered work from the Ballet Frankfurt's past. Jenny Gilbert complained that the works were 'scaled down', observing that the changeover from the Ballet Frankfurt to the more streamlined Forsythe Company had reduced the impact. Sarah Crompton argued that the programme felt more like 'repetitive doodles around an interesting idea rather than fully-fledged dance works'. Clement Crisp offered advice through an ironised metonym: 'if you still need to know what is wrong with our world, Forsythe's dances are no bad guide'.<sup>2</sup> This is a clever, glib remark and I wonder what it really means, but it certainly forces us to think about the purpose of those four dances, as do comments about scale and what the definition is of 'fully-fledged' dance.

Perhaps it was the unadorned theatricality that caused the shock at Sadler's Wells, and I agree it could seem strangely limiting if that was your mindset. For in this programme, which also included *N.N.N.N.*, *Of Any, if And*, and *One flat thing, reproduced*, there was a shortage not only of 'real' music, but of ornate costumes and easily coherent dance. At times there were lengthy periods of apparent silence, and the dancers dressed down in the kind of wacky gear that they would wear in rehearsal. Lighting was often dim, and the dance vocabulary was limited, at least some people thought so.



*Of Any if And* with Dana Caspersen and Thomas McManus  
Photo by Dominik Mentzov

But what was it that filled the silence, and how did the performers communicate rhythmically? How was it that the movement felt so intense? How were the dancers able to move into passages of independent dance, with the kind of split second timing that revealed an alertness to what everyone else on stage was doing?

If instead of concern for reduction and a lessening of scale, there had been awareness of the complexity of what was happening on stage, then it was possible to experience something rich and rare.

Forsythe believes that it is the responsibility of the creative artist to keep searching for something new, and this guides his choreography, causing him to look at dance theatre through a sensibility super-charged with the kind of knowledge that comes out of continuing enquiry. He is guided by a conviction that 'movement and the co-ordination of the body are the highest form of thinking'. These words were printed in the Edinburgh Festival Theatre programme for the Dutch National Ballet's production of Forsythe's evening-long *Artifact*, and argue for dance's achievement in a way that is not normally granted.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps they can be understood through the dancer's total involvement, and the demands of surrendering to the dance while retaining a psycho-physical individuality.



*Artifact*  
with Dana Caspersen  
and Fabrice Mazliah  
Photo by Dieter Schwer

In *Artifact*, Forsythe introduces solo violin music by Bach (his Chaconne in D Minor) to explore a particular relationship between dance and music. But, rather than the continuous unfolding of a classically organised piece, the musical journey is fractured, interrupted in what feels like its prime by periods of silence, and the dance is cut off by the banging down of a curtain.

Bach is, of course, synonymous with harmony and continuity, as we were reminded during BBC Radio 3's marathon Bach Christmas.<sup>4</sup> When the music for Forsythe's ballet was played, I found myself once more experiencing the dance as a lived entity, remembering its special way of hitting targets like arrows, and of releasing threads of silver along the way. People rush to criticise Forsythe's cutting up of sight and sound, but the experience becomes valuable if, instead of rejecting it because it doesn't support revered beliefs about classicism, we try to discern purpose. Here, I think, Forsythe was commenting on relationships involving pulse, metre and harmony, and stressing the character of the dance in terms that equalled that of the music, and it was the individuality of his approach that made me connect to the absent dance through the musical presence.



William Forsythe and Ballet Frankfurt Dancer  
Photo by Dominik Mentzos

In general terms, one of the most infectious aspects of the choreography centres on a single word: awareness. No matter how fragmented the dance, no matter how many angles break up linear continuity, there is always a dynamic connection running through the bodies, a sense that what the dancers do is because they understand the logic of the piece and its need to be hard-driven. When the movement reaches its maximum potential there is a glorious stretch of energy running from fingers through the length of the body to the toes. But there is awareness too in its opposite, when bodies fold back into themselves, when we see the organisation of muscles and joints that makes us conscious of a dancer's inner being. Dancers drop to the floor with a plasticity that takes them through all manner of arcs and lines and suggests bonelessness and limitless imagery: it is hard to understand how they have the muscular power to make it seem so easy.

I always think that the way to watch is, first, to be alert to what is communicated kinaesthetically, or to the empathy through

which we perceive and sense the motion. Often I find my energy heightened by the rigour of fulfilled movement, not in the conventional ballet sense of arriving at a perfected pose, but because it appears organically attuned. Forsythe's dancers are rhythmically alive, alert not only to their own responsibilities (of course) but to other people's different activities. The focus of each individual suggests self-knowledge and a willingness to appear spontaneous and open to risk, which is essential for Forsythe's habit of shifting between precisely organised choreography and structured improvisation.

A characteristic that I would like to draw attention to, because it strikes me afresh every time I watch a performance, is the dancers' awareness of their upper bodies, where something is always animated. Flexed feet and spikey fingers are never presented as isolated effects, but make clear connection with a centred physical strength. Isn't this obvious? Well yes it might be – but with many ballet companies, arms are not so important as legs, and often there are 'dead' bits in the upper back, pointing to a lack of central awareness. How often have you watched a ballet performance and noticed a dancer's twitching fingers, which provide clear evidence of a lack of strength running between torso and arms? The arms and backs of Forsythe's dancers are energised to seem lifted and filled with air, or if the movement requires different kinds of qualities then there is still an extraordinary coordination running through body and limbs that enables them to move at speed into all kinds of planes and changing directions.

While it is hard not to empty the mind of expectation, it helps to try and see what is present in the work rather than what is not. There is always so much happening in any choreography by Forsythe, far more than can be experienced at any one time. What is generated by his cultural awareness are ideas from disciplines such as philosophy, literary theory, science and mathematics. These lead to ambiguity, and where there is ambiguity, so there are hidden thoughts and constructs that invite contemplation. There are no sound bites, no quick fixes, and the more you see the more you recognise a new kind of fullness in the choreography, in the ideas that lie behind each work, no matter how much bodies and cultural 'isms' are deconstructed. The more you look, the more, I believe, it becomes possible to see that the scale is certainly not reduced.

For the dance, as it releases inner experience, in ways that stretch the life of the mind, makes performers and viewers aware that it serves as a metaphor for being. It insists that we become proactive in what we experience. It invites us to become critics, and in so doing to recognise that no matter how minimal it may seem there is always more to discover and experience in Forsythe's dances.

1. There are now 18 dancers rather than the 33 who were on the Ballet Frankfurt's final roll. Ironically the new company is also based in Frankfurt, no longer at the opera house but in a compellingly spacious, converted tram shed.
2. Quoted, respectively, from: The Independent OnLine, 26.9.2005; arts.telegraph, 26.9.2005; FT.com, 26.9.2005.
3. The Ballet Frankfurt premiere of *Artifact* was 1984, the DNB performed during the 1999 Edinburgh International Festival, and Forsythe's own company brought *Artifact* to Sadler's Wells in 2001.
4. Over a period of ten days every single piece of music written by Bach was played on Radio 3 – an extraordinary, enlightening initiative.

## Ann Nugent

*Dr Ann Nugent is a dance critic, writer and Senior Lecturer at the University of Chichester, where she runs modules at Master's and undergraduate level on Dance Criticism and European Dance Theatre. She is, however, currently on sabbatical leave to write a book on the Forsythe aesthetic. Ann is a former editor of Dance Theatre Journal and Dance Now.*

*(Dr Alan Salter is a long-standing member of the Guild and first danced with Christa Haring's City Dance Theatre and later taught at Goldsmiths. His interest include the therapeutic and psychological aspects of movement with a strong recognition of Laban's work; Alan has authored a number of books - see footnote).*

### Beginnings:

Observe, try out, and think with logic and imagination. In *The Mastery of Movement* Laban's investigative approach to his field of study embarks as if from nothing. The remarkable achievement was general and systematic, able to encompass action from choreographic quirks to ceremonial patterns, from this shrug to that shove.

To dancers coming from traditions of fixed moves this could be puzzling, but its rationality has immediate appeal to the therapist seeking to map disorder. Polar opposites such as gathering and scattering, rising and sinking, thrusting and floating, stable and labile, delimit ranges of possibilities in a way not unlike the personality measures of psychology. Laban accepted objective physicality and subjective experience more as givens than as philosophical mysteries. The task was to develop both theoretical analysis and practical method, taking into account the deep mutuality of impression and expression.

This article does not attempt any kind of survey of the influence of Laban (always including the many who contributed to and have developed the work) on therapy whether for improvement of body or of mind. The intent is rather to present a wide perspective on the body which may illuminate our present position, and to suggest that in a therapy of everyday life we can redesign harmful action, re-balance our overall patterns of activity, and invest even the mundane with quality and pleasure.

Human beings evolved living in small groups closely engaged with each other and with the natural environment, its opportunities and risks. Culture and self-awareness modify life, and there is a sense in which for natural psycho-biological movement we best look to other species for uncontaminated examples. The first deliberate making required action to adapt itself to an artificial task. From making communicatively with ourselves and making functionally among ourselves, we have turned to making of ourselves and through learning have altered human nature beyond biology.

The anthropology of the body still influences us, but our ecological and social concerns are vastly changed. Compare a typical modern life of dwelling in a flat surrounded but isolated, commuting amidst crowds to work with electronic interfaces: most transactions with other role holders are mediated or distant, and life determining influences are inaccessibly remote. Yet all this is regarded as normal compared to the avoidance and fantasy of drugs, chat rooms and engineered bodies. A most dark future of physical control and mental manipulation lurks at the boundaries of our reality. It is hard to identify much that is natural and appropriate to our origins, so small wonder that angst and anomie and just plain stress are endemic.

Some cultural factors have developed over a span of many thousand years, language for example and artistic expression, but city life is recent history and intensive technology outpaces even social mechanisms. Large societies brought writing and

specialist skills but also the ideology to exploit others on a massive scale. The bodies of slaves and prostitutes were and are owned, and the search for workers who can be oppressed is now global: those who are not approved fellow citizens may be treated as wholly other things as we still see in the vile jingoism of war. In contrast we find that through movement choirs for ordinary people, concern with working activity and with a theatre of meaning relevant to all, Laban offers a radical therapeutic programme aimed more at public health than individual cure.

### Reasons:

Early beliefs in the supernatural were explanatory and essentially extrapolated from human conduct, so spirits and



their doings were not far removed from common narrative. It is not surprising that the sometimes mysterious disappearance of life from body should lead to wonder at its passing elsewhere, or that talking to the dead should not come from a simple need to put relationships in order. But the world view of the religions of holy books has often been injurious to the natural body. Either the body may be seen as the prerogative of a designer god and hedged about with prohibitions as against the making of likeness, or as the antithesis of soul and a source of evil to be suppressed. Often the performing arts, above all dance, have been confined to sacred rite or despised as carnal and profane. The gradual dominance of solitary father gods of tyrannical disposition has been particularly severe on women. In reprisal for these obstacles however the aesthetic widely functions as an alternative source of truth and beauty.

That Laban movement is not founded on the mystical is not to deny it can help us to heightened awareness and a sense of spirituality. Theatre, from the comic who bravely mocks to the tragedian who unflinchingly reveals, is a great treasure for humanity. But we should at least note that theatre dance is perhaps the harshest of professions. As the flat pictoriality of the proscenium stage prompted turned out hips, abstract formalism has required near mechanical body versatility; and sheer competitiveness has engendered extraordinary demands of all kinds.

Against this is that aspect of Laban theory which connects with the aesthetic of its times in closely integrating form and function and accepting mankind as the model and basis for

design. In this way *choreutics* is reached by elaboration from body structure, dimensional and planar, so that, for example, icosahedral patterns are not imposed theoretically but arrived at; and scalar sequences are explicable quite naturally as illustrating the physical motivation of recovery from preceding states in continually evolving changes of sensation and action. This aesthetic outlook has been at the heart of modernism, of buildings made to purpose rather than to resemble antecedents and of paintings whose content is based on colour and configuration rather than depiction. Laban notation similarly avoids the look-alike attempt at pictorial resemblance and has only the most fundamental kinship with morphology. As a formal notation system with discrete signs it readily lends itself to applications beside simple reconstruction. Notational jottings can help clinical observation and it is possible in a scientific spirit to classify and quantify signs so to illuminate what is distinctive about a series of movement events.

It is currently fashionable to view rationality as outmoded. In therapy this corresponds to abandoning all ideas of normality and coherent practice. As an ideology it is surely not worth describing as religious or aesthetic, merely fatuous and reliant on the serendipity of privilege.

#### Minds:

Many psychological problems arise from our complex interweaving of self-perception, both internally generated and from external attribution, and of other-hypothesising. In the midst of 'I think you think ...' two people manage to collide on an empty pavement, identity becomes uncertain and relationships chaotic. Life can become hopelessly complex, leaving us vulnerable to the easy substitution of rigid or neurotic beliefs so we lose track of common sense, even the direct evidence of our own perceptions and feelings.

It seems a fair guess that we began as natural behaviourists with the kind of unity that underlies most classical views of human nature. In early literature and drama characters might set out to deceive others but could not deceive themselves. Then comes the doubting, reflective soliloquy, and more recently still the subtext of meaning to be indirectly discovered. In aesthetics post-modernism offers the dubious alternatives of de-constructing self-referential texts with vanishing authors, of giving primary concern to marginal or not-art, or ceding explanation to obscure institutional forces.

The philosophically parallel disruption developed with an absolute distinction between material body and potentially enduring mind: but this made it very difficult to explain how these incompatibles could connect. The failure of the vitalist attempt to infuse body with some special life force, a kind of natural soul, and the later recognition of both conscious and unconscious mentality further compounded the problem. It became unclear which, if any, of body, thought, behaviour or being a person might be truly fundamental. Laban, to his credit, side-stepped these debates and offered in *Choreutics* a notion of shadow-forms acting in the mental dynamosphere as generative correlates of action-moods and even of thought. However sketchy these ideas, they are surprisingly in tune with current motoric and network theories. The functional role of movement as interactive with emotion, not as mere display, is another of Laban's insights particularly relevant to therapy.

#### Applications:

Historically it was first in theatre and then in education that Laban theory most found application. Although the Guild has had some distinguished therapist members there has, puzzlingly,

not been the energy and will to establish a central Laban practitioner group. Instead ideas and methods diffused into a variety of practices. The *Art of Movement* in schools clearly had both bodily health and personal development (self-actualisation) among its aims. Two distinctive notions were the freedom from arbitrary and prescribed movement and that of effort as a key to realising individuality. Sometimes, alas, these were pursued with such purism that creativity was denied necessary practical pegs of dance action to work with, and meaning and communication near vanished. If doing is important so too (with some exceptions such as the very young) is explaining and embodying the creative into shareable forms. As a therapist one can sometimes ask without explanation for a certain doing, but the justification of purpose has to become evident. Perhaps a similar comment might be made about the whole programme of child-centred education which could be too subtle and creative for some teachers to energise fruitfully: slightly more help and a mite less idealism might have spared us from the unfair blaming that has given an excuse for the imposition of a thoroughly reprehensible curriculum which, among many defects, prefers that most become compliant cogs rather than expressive agents.



Therapeutically there are interesting comparisons with drama and the active exploration of alternative roles, with art therapy where open tasks allow a permissive being alongside, and with music and its mediated interplay. All these doings may elicit symbolic behaviour with often surprisingly transparent meaning. Several contemporary psychotherapeutic approaches strongly emphasise doing, enactment, and range from using the body to directly oppose the mind, as through relaxation, to relying on performance to create a new normality; and there are many body based devices along the way.

#### Values:

Appeal to the naturally evolved body makes a sharp contrast to contemporary body realities. In the minority privileged world we consumers sink under our own weight obliging the twin commerces of eating and slimming (and sometimes parasitic therapy), or pursue ideas of fitness almost as grotesque as the obese passivity repudiated. While some take absurd risks others will do anything to stay alive and even more of anything to stay apparently young. At the most ambitious edge of contemporary ideology there is a sense of body as sign and as thing, a sexual, social and economic instrument. So we trade organs, pay with plastic for plastic makeovers, and - as our own bodies become production line - oblige the operatives with elective birth surgery that crucially separates the reproductive from the sexual, and

even with a convenient demand for euthanasia, fearing perhaps rightly that no-one has time to care for dying persons.

In a world of packaged solutions - the tablets, the hypnosis, the exercise routine - the exploratory and generalist Laban approach can lack competitive edge. Yet there seems no reason why more holistic and open-ended but still clearly defined movement prescriptions should not be provided. Every movement occurrence is a specific and many of us, even if no longer professionally dance fit, will have personal routines that are quite fixed. Laban describes over a hundred exercises, so there seems no reason to hesitate in formulating material suitable for particular groups and purposes. It is worth emphasising that movement values can be expressed even with most limited body facility and endure as part and parcel of self. In such formulation some knowledge of the basic body sciences and of movement repertoires from various traditions is helpful, but the essentials of movement process and interaction are within the system.

Movement values centre on the fitting rather than on fitness alone. Part of the therapeutic approach involves establishing what best suits the person proper and how to counter any impediment. Here again general understanding has usually to be encapsulated into specific advice about activity, perhaps into carefully tailored movement which takes account of the needed elements and transitions and, at the simplest, of body, effort, space and relationship.

Humanity is, as ever, in great need of help, with familiar problems on a vast scale and alarming new ones: surely the Guild should not be too diffident about what it can contribute and in so doing renew its own future. The resources of Laban movement study and practice are so much richer than of other systems. Moving well in general life centres on what is true to personality and fitting to situation. The virtues of economy and grace can be a backdrop to resources of variety and contrast that raise the energy and quality of our experience and our contribution to the world, that give flight to effort.

**Footnote.** Among my Guild articles are:

*Movement & Mind* (73, 1984),

*Dance, Therapy and the Quasi-Personal in Art* (80, 1991)

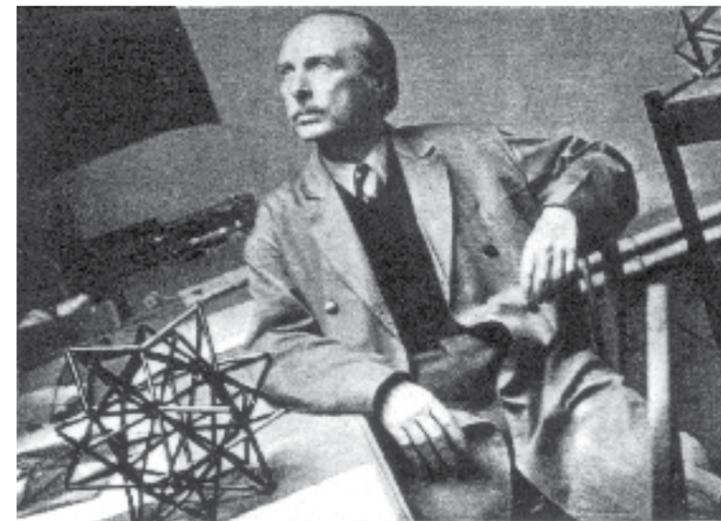
*Expressive Behaviour Therapy* (15.2, 1996).

(I recently contacted nearby Guild members in hope of generating local activity together and one reply here relevant came from Margaret Whitehead (physical-literacy.org.uk). Television therapy abounds with movement interventions, and 'Making Slough Happy' included very cheering examples of movement as everyday therapy including gentle relationship, loveable housework, and dynamic improvisation).

*Alan Salter*

## Charismatic Crystals

*(The Editor reflects on the perennial charisma of crystals and Laban's 'glorification of the great and general order of crystallisation ...')*  
Rudolf Laban 1926 (1)



Rudolf Laban in his workshop at Dennington Hall, 1938

#### Crystal connotations:

What meanings, then, can illuminate the 'crystal' concept? The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* obliges:

- 1) Ice, clear ice; 2) A mineral, clear transparent like ice;
- 3) A piece of rock crystal ... esp., one used in magic art;
- 4) Crystal glass ... high transparency ...;
- 5) A form which molecules regularly aggregate by operation of molecular affinity ... has a definite internal structure with the external form of a solid enclosed in a number of symmetrically arranged plane faces ...;
- 6) Wireless. A mineral used for 'rectifying' an oscillatory current ...

References abound in Laban's writings to such derivatives and compounds as: 'crystallisation', 'crystalline', 'crystallographic', 'crystal-space', 'dance-crystal', 'crystalline-power', 'invisible-crystal', 'gestural-crystal', 'thought-crystal' - and many more besides; but it is to definition 5 that Laban's usage approximates most frequently, although other meanings appear at times to merge into his general conception - especially ideas of 'high transparency', 'magic art' and even 'oscillatory current'. Whilst chemical, electro-magnetic and mineralogical connotations are present in Laban's writings - especially the theme of molecular affinity - it is essentially the *geometrical 'external form of a solid enclosed in a number of symmetrically arranged plane faces'* which seems to have been, for Laban, a major preoccupation.

But perhaps we should first take a bird's-eye view of crystalline forms in general and then in particular those which reveal affinities (or disparities) with Laban's own special kind of 'crystallography'. We shall espy 'nature's crystals', 'gemstone crystals', 'therapeutic crystals', 'Pythagorean and Platonic crystals', 'Kepler's crystals', 'Froebel's crystals', - if only to catch a glimpse of the possible instances which may have inspired, and ultimately led - to Laban's crystals.

Undoubtedly, 'crystals' have captured the imaginations of poets, mineralogists, mathematicians, jewellers, architects, theologians, physiologists, philosophers, educationalists, medics, mystics, myth-makers, astrologists, spiritualists, cosmologists and choreographers alike - for millennia, and Laban's fascination with crystals is no exception! That the theme of 'crystalline forms' has been chosen by the *Guild's Council*, for its *Diamond Jubilee Annual General Meeting* in 2006, would seem to be both a celebration and a challenge to serious reflection on their relevance to movement and dance in the 21st Century. Crystal themes are central to Laban's many faceted interests; but these interests were not, we know, the superficial sparkle of anniversary diamond crystal gemstones; they were, for him, symbols of deep significance - their secret laws were embodied in atoms, molecules, sacred geometry, as well as in the harmony of both cosmic motion and the movements of man.

## Nature's Crystals:

Crystallographers remind us that crystal structures may be massive, granular, compact or only microscopically visible crystals. Such crystals are also characterised by their 'hardness', 'lustre', 'colour', 'streak', 'cleavage', 'fracture', 'specific gravity', 'fluorescence', 'magnetism', 'radioactivity' and 'tenacity'. Furthermore, we learn that a crystal structure must be *inorganic* - 'naturally occurring with a definite chemical composition' - with 'an orderly geometric spatial arrangement of atoms in the internal structure ...'. Atoms in crystals, we find, display regular patterns of movement with electrons and neutrons orbiting their nuclei. Scientifically, the necessary condition for crystals, we learn, is their *inorganic* (as opposed to living) nature.

So what has all this scientific crystallography to do with Laban's fascination with crystals and their application to human ('living') movement and dance? We find that Laban believed that:

*'... the study of crystallinity gives understanding of the natural harmony of movement ...'*

(Laban Art of Movement Guild News Sheet No7 51:13)

## Gemstone Crystals:

Nothing engages the eye with so much delight (and often desirability) as the sheer beauty of sparkling, prismatic, lustrous, light-reflecting, refracting, light-dispersing, sensuous, colourful and faceting gemstones – jewels to be idolised, worn, gazed-upon, status-bestowing, therapeutic, treasured, prized, loved and even worshipped! Diamonds, sapphires, rubies, opals, pearls, amethysts, jaspers and emeralds – all are admired for their beauty, colours, shape, durability, delicacy, rarity, fashionableness and value. Necklaces, bracelets, amulets, rings, and brooches; they are also symbols of power and high office – whether in sceptres, orbs, maces, tiaras or the jewelled crowns of royalty!



Goldsmith's millennium diamond

(There are reports of the existence of a 'Jubilee Diamond ... a glorious, colourless, cushion-shaped diamond weighing 245 carats which in its original form had the shape of 'an irregular octahedron' out of which 'a superb diamond of exceptional purity and size was produced as a present to Queen Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee. However, we gather it was never given to her and 'the diamond's former setting was changed into a brooch ... resembling ... a six pointed star').

Whilst we find little reference in Laban's writings to *gemstones* crystals *per se*, we do find that he revered special kinds of crystal shapes - notably the regular Platonic solids (tetrahedron, octahedron, icosahedron, dodecahedron and cube); these were his crystal 'jewels' – not least the icosahedron.

So attached to the Platonic crystals was Laban that he took a pocket-size set with him 'through thick and thin' - and as one schoolmaster, with whom Laban stayed in Bavaria, reports:



*'... one thing I shall never forget, and that was the mysterious little box with crystal shapes which he (Laban) guarded like a magician, and only opened when he wanted to give final emphasis to his words. He carried the box around with him through thick and thin, until he arrived and could make further use of it in England ...'* (Guild Magazine December

54:22)

## Therapeutic Crystals:

We are aware that it has long been believed that possessing and wearing crystal gemstones has a beneficial effect on health and healing; the extent to which these beliefs are held can be gathered from the following remarkable claims to be found in Judy Hall's *Crystal Bible* (2):

*A sapphire is alleged: to focus and calm the mind and release mental tension bringing peace of mind and serenity; it also stimulates concentration bringing prosperity; it heals the eyes, treats blood disorders and strengthens the veins thus improving their elasticity.*

*A ruby we are told: imparts vigour to, and passion for, life; it energizes, although it may over-stimulate delicate people; it promotes clear visualisation and promotes dynamic leadership; it fires up enthusiasm, promotes potency and vigour.*

*An Amethyst: is an extremely powerful and protective stone; a natural tranquiliser, has strong healing and cleansing powers and enhances spiritual awareness. Traditionally it was worn to prevent drunkenness ...*

*Opal: - a delicate stone with a fine vibration; it enhances cosmic consciousness and induces psychic and mystical visions ...*

*Emerald: - a stone of infinite inspiration and patience ... brings domestic bliss and loyalty ... aids recovery after infectious illness ... alleviates rheumatism and diabetes ...*

*Diamond: - a symbol of purity ... bonds relationships ... a sign of commitment and fidelity ... an amplifier of energy ... imparts fearlessness, invincibility, and fortitude ...*

There is little evidence that Laban's fascination was specifically related to the attributes and healing qualities of crystal 'gemstones' as such, but we do know that he found therapeutic qualities in human movement in direct relation to Plato's divine crystals. He states that:

*'... man is inclined to follow the connecting lines of the twelve corner points of an icosahedron with his movements in travelling as it were along an invisible network of paths ... travelling along some of these paths produces harmonious and serene or gay feelings and impressions, while the following of other paths evokes feelings and impressions of anger, unhappiness and disharmony ...'* *ibid.* (Guild News Sheet No 7 Sept 1951:13)

(See also Dr Carol-Lynne Moore on *Laban's Concept of Health* in this issue)

## Pythagorean and Platonic Crystals:

That crystals have played a pivotal role in cosmology, sacred geometry and mythology is consistently borne out by distinguished classical scholars (not least Keith Critchlow). But one, Rupert Lodge, has put the case so simply in his *Philosophy of Plato* by asking us to consider what the Pythagoreans tell us ('they should know if any one does', he says). A wonderful child-like story of the universe's crystal creation is therefore conjured up – (are you sitting comfortably?):

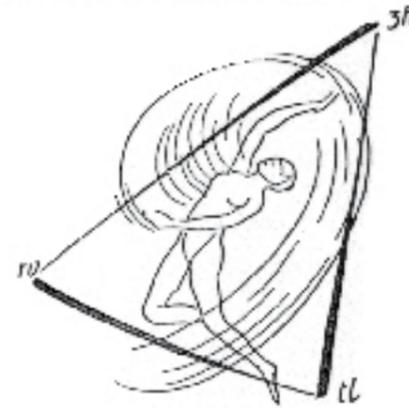
*Once upon a time, dear children (he seems to say), this world of ours was not like what it is now ... It was what the older poets call 'chaos'. There weren't any laws, or regular patterns. There weren't any 'elements'. There wasn't anything the mind could grasp at all. There was just a vast swirling sort of motion. You couldn't call it earthy, or watery, or fiery, or even airy. In fact it hadn't any definite character at all ... it is still there; and always will be. You and I can't really, of ourselves, do very much about it. ... But God can. And God did. Somewhere at the beginning of time, He decided that it would be more beautiful, if he superimposed upon chaos – law and order, and reduced its behaviour to some sort of organised unity, some sort of intelligible system. So God ... superinduced upon the 'chaos' – mathematical patterning; in fact the very patterns which our clever Pythagorean brothers have been discovering for us. First God made of all the uneasy motions – one great motion; circular motion. This enclosed all*

*the chaotic material there was, and left nothing over, nothing outside its dominance. And what did we have then? Surely, a sphere? Yes ... a sphere. And in this sphere, were formed very gradually, - well, the kinds of solid (regular, mathematical solid, that is), which you can form within a sphere. ... These solids, as our Pythagorean brothers have taught us, might be tetrahedra, octahedra, dodekahedra, icosahedra and cubes. They are like the crystals you can sometimes see for yourself in ice-water, when it is nearly frozen ... All these beautiful crystal-like forms which enclose parts of the original chaos, make up the world we see and know. (my bold)*

*The Philosophy of Plato R P Lodge (3)*

This fascinating story continues – but not without some stringent moral and practical imperatives - for we discover that the Pythagoreans called upon their followers to purify their lives, by:

*Copying, imitating ... the mathematically perfect regularity of the celestial orbits ... The true way of life for initiates will thus be a ritual forth-showing of the systematic implications of the Pythagorean triangle inscribed within its circle ... p.47*



'Drawing by Rudolf Laban' *Choreographie* 1926

And did not Plato issue a similar imperative, notably:

*'... the body should be looked after following the pattern of the universe 'for the motions in us that are akin to the divine are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe' (4)*

## Laban in turn states that:

*... it cannot be said too often, and is a unique conception to be stressed repeatedly and to be remembered: movement, the path of our surroundings, the path as a sign, a symbol of the complex pathways of the universe, - it is to this that today we are directed ... (5)*

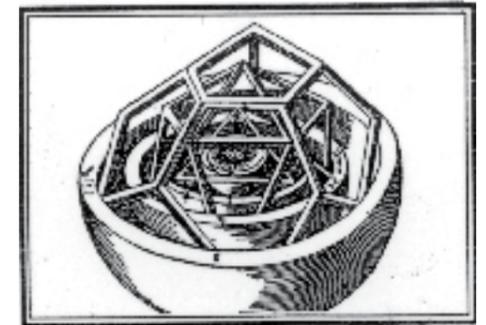
*'... one should really devote one's energy to the regulation of the crystalline form of the body ...' (6)*

## Kepler's Crystals:

An inspired transposition of Pythagorean thought, with its embodiment in crystals, is to be found in the monumental achievements of one Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), a German astronomer who was enamoured by the Pythagorean and Platonic dream – and his discoveries led, remarkably, to the edifice of modern astronomy. We learn that it was 'one of the most astonishing episodes in the history of thought ...'. (7) So astonishing was Kepler's cosmology, built around the dream of Pythagorean geometrical crystals and musical harmonies, that it is difficult to believe it was heralded by the universities of the day as 'a glorious work of erudition'. Kepler's belief in the five perfect bodies, nonetheless, 'led to momentous and true scientific discoveries and yielded new laws of nature'.

Can it be the case Laban's belief in the five perfect bodies has

## Kepler's Mysterium Cosmographicum



Kepler (1571-1630)  
Fig: the perfect solids and the intervals of the planets

similarly led to 'momentous' discoveries - but this time in the sphere of movement and dance? Let us also take a fleeting glance at Friedrich Froebel - an educator of the twentieth century.

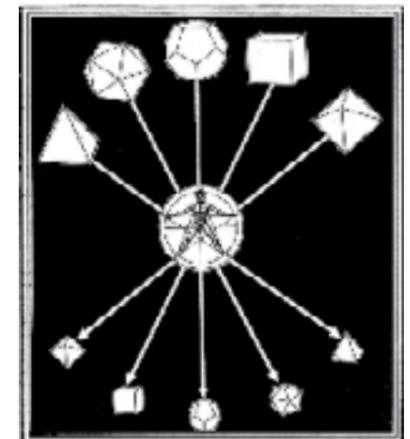
## Froebels' Crystals:

Here we find yet more neo-Pythagorean sacred geometry - this time in Froebel's theory and practice of education. Froebel's Kindergarten *gifts and occupations*, symbolised the Pythagorean and Platonic crystals - so much so, that Froebel declared:

*'What I had seen in so many ways in the great universe, in the life of men, in the development of humanity, I saw again in the smallest crystal. I saw it clearly, that the divine is not only in the greatest, it is also in the most minute things ... Thus my earth crystals became to me a mirror of the development and history of mankind ... (8)*

## The Great Chain of Being

- from Mysterium Cosmographicum -  
'the outer order of planets'



The cube, octahedron, tetrahedron and sphere were, for Froebel, the very embodiment of 'unity' and 'harmony' in man and the universe, but pride of place was given to the crystal 'sphere', and with it a programme of children's circular movements.

We are also reminded of Laban's own interest in circular exercises; he writes:

*'... through circular exercises and harmonious sequences the child not only tries to identify himself with the world ... and with the infinite but also weave bonds between the infinite and the world ...' (9)*

## Laban's Choreosopical Crystals:

To most people who are aware of Laban's ideas, the inspiration of: 'eukinetics (effort)', 'choreutics (icosahedra, space harmony and scales of movement)', 'movement analysis of time, weight, space

and flow', 'movement pattern analysis', 'movement therapy', 'community dance', 'movement choirs' and 'Labanotation' – will all spring to mind. What will be less familiar, understandably, are the underlying choreosophical and philosophical underpinnings of his fruitful ideas. But as one writer suggests:

*'... It is always profitable to trace to their source the ideas which inspired a prophet, for there alone is to be found the secret of the strength of their influence in his teachings ...'*  
(10)

The 'ideas which inspired' the prophet Rudolf Laban, however, have received meagre attention - although some research was done in the 60s and re-visited in 2001. (11) This is not surprising when we read the quotations from Laban we have cited above, for they locate his inspiration fairly and squarely in the somewhat 'mystical biology of his Age' which in turn reflected the *Philosophy of Plato* - notably *Plato's Timaeus*.

A further piece of research by Dr Evelyn Dörr, published in 2000, entitled: *The Spiritual-Philosophical context of the choreographic work of Rudolf Laban between 1897-1936*, (12) places Laban's ideas firmly in a Neo-Platonic setting of a 'romantic natural philosophy' period prevalent at the end of the nineteenth century in Germany – a philosophy which undoubtedly chimed with his Pythagorean interests and influenced him deeply. Dörr's leading question on the 'crystal' is relevant to our theme, she asks:

*'... What can the iconology of the inner space of the crystal tell us about choreosophy?'*  
*'What were the roots of (Laban's) crystal thinking? ...'*

Among Dörr's conclusions are that:

*'... The crystal became the symbol of (a) romantic philosophy ...'*  
*'... the crystal was the geometric site of an ideology, which attempted to connect Religion and Rationalism ...'*  
*'... The crystal became celebrated in the nature festivals of the Naturalists ... as a living image of Nature ... a cult object ...'*  
*'... The crystal as a function-analytical symbolic form also aimed into the heart of Laban's choreosophy ...'*  
*'... the Crystal was ... the ideal symbolic form for the expressionist artist ...'*

Laban's ideas according to Dörr were:

*'... directed towards a specific choreographic interpretation ... the Dancer in Crystal ...'*  
*'... the icosaheder ... was the spatial model of Laban's choreology ...'*  
*'... in the crystalline master image, the human Finite is reflected in the cosmic Infinite, the Artistic in the Natural, the Concrete in the Universal ...'*  
*'... The Crystal dancer symbolised (Laban's) philosophy of space ...'*  
*'... The Crystal as a spatial symbol embodied the Universal Laws of Nature ...'*  
*'... the Crystal-Dancer directly expresses the essence of the World ...'*

#### Celebrations!

We might well ask whether all this seemingly mystical crystal symbolism has any relevance to present-day theory and practice of movement and dance and whether we should be celebrating a Diamond Jubilee of the Guild with the 'crystal' as its iconological theme - or whether it should be jettisoned as a historical curiosity? The latter course would, we believe, be disastrous – for by so doing we should lose much of our deeper understanding of Laban's fertile and wide-ranging ideas - which become incandescently clear in the light of his Platonic cosmological crystal philosophy; they are the key to his most basic assumptions and prescriptions for practice. Without such knowledge much of his philosophical writing remains obscure. Nothing can explain so revealingly,

Laban's concepts of 'universal movement forms', 'kinesphere', 'dynamosphere', 'geometrical regular solids', 'triangles', 'axial inclinations', 'golden section', 'harmony', 'trace forms', 'scales', 'flux', 'chaos' – and even the geometrical symbols in 'Kinestography Laban' – than an awareness of his cosmological inspiration. Laban's legacy has not been invalidated by his fascination with 'ancient wisdom'; history is alive with examples of brilliant artistic and scientific achievements which have sprung from Pythagorean and Platonic thought.

But contemporary scholars and practitioners have not remained awestruck in thrall of Laban's ancient crystal wisdom – they have systematically (and in some cases radically) transposed and applied Laban's choreosophical ideas in order to make them applicable to the 21<sup>st</sup> century – whether in dance theatre, dance training, dance criticism, movement therapy, movement pattern analysis, notation, community dance, health, philosophical discourse, anthropology or psychology. (13) Among those who are to be admired for having pioneered these transpositions are: Lisa Ullmann, Sylvia Bodmer, Geraldine Stepenson, Albrecht Knust, Ann Hutchinson Guest, Marion North, Valerie Preston-Dunlop, Vera Maletic, Warren Lamb, Irmgard Bartenieff, Jean Newlove, Betty Redfern, Jean Johnson Jones, Judith Chapman, Sally Archbutt, Hettie Loman, Ellinor Hinks, June Layson, Vivien Bridson, Lorna Wilson, Carol-Lynne Moore, Alan Salter, Jeremy Longstaff, Jacqueline Smith-Autard, Anna Carlisle, Sam Thornton, William Forsythe, Diana Jordan, Joan Goodrich, Margaret Dunn, Mollie Davies, Walli Meier, Michael Platt, *The National Resource Centre for Dance* and the *Laban Centre for Movement and Dance* – now *LABAN*, and of course *HMI*s (see Don Buckland's survey).

Celebrations, however, bring with them re-assessment, and there remain a huge number of unanswered questions concerning Laban's fascination with crystals which require explanation – not least (according to the scientist) that whereas:

*'... The shapes and symmetries of crystals are characteristic of 'dead' matter ...'* (14)

the 'Crystal-Dancer' is the very incarnation of vibrant human expression!

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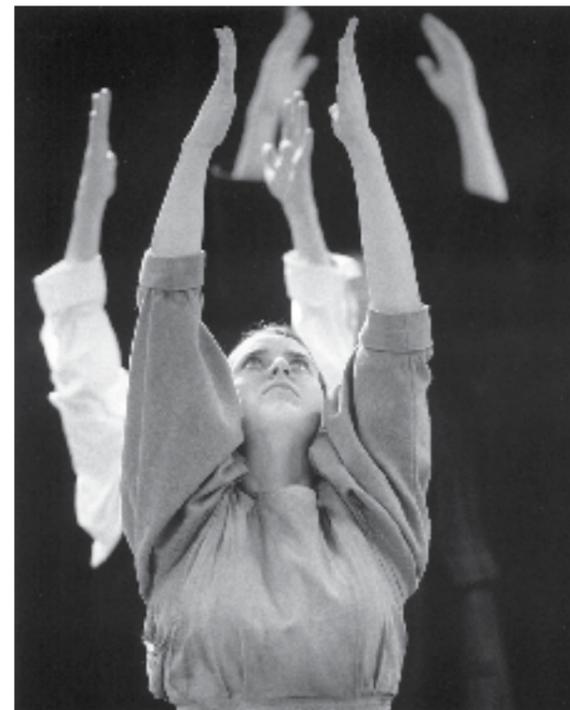
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*Gordon Curl*

# Mastery of Movement on the Stage

- the Editor looks at a decade of astonishing achievements by **The Suffolk Youth Theatre!**

*'... skilfully designed and wonderfully controlled movement – exquisitely choreographed choruses – dramatic slow-motions – powerfully expressive frozen tableaux – expanding gestures dissolving into dance – rambunctious moments of bravura and riotous action – snappy routines – sung solo moments of pathos and deep emotion – rhythmic chanting - the haunting percussive sound of feet, hands and props – enchanting music and exotic lighting, scenery and costumes - extraordinary focussed faces with eyes piercing the audience – the amazing absorption, conviction, intensity and virtuosity of these 15-18 year-old Thespians – all a rare sight to behold ...!'*



These are some of the eulogies that have found their way into our Magazine pages over the past decade – an incredible achievement by Director Michael Platt, Musical Director Pat Whymark, Production Manager Jos Leeder and all their staff – and the amazing young actors themselves. And what is more, it is all set to continue: Michael Platt reports:

*In May 2006 Suffolk Youth Theatre celebrates its 12<sup>th</sup> Birthday with a vibrant production of Lorca's tragic poem Yerma. Suffolk Youth Theatre is one of the region's leading youth theatre companies. They have gained a deserved reputation for innovative and visually exciting shows.*

*Suffolk Youth Theatre is for young people aged 14 – 21 who have an interest in drama and the performing arts. It offers them a unique experience of working collaboratively with other artistically driven young people from a range of Suffolk schools. Over the six-month rehearsal period the company works together with a team of professional artists and designers, culminating in performances at The New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich. In addition to this, Suffolk Youth Theatre hosts*

*an annual one-week summer school involving 70 young people. In one intensive week of workshops and rehearsals they devise and perform an original piece of theatre, fusing drama, music and dance.*

*The current company of 24 performers represents schools from across the county of Suffolk. Many of the young people involved study Drama and performing arts at GCSE and A level and go on to pursue these interests at Degree level. Several past members are now working professionally in theatre and film and can be seen in the West End, National Theatre and on BBC1!*

**Michael outlines the importance of Laban's work to Suffolk Youth Theatre**

*'Movements of the body, including the movement of the voice -producing organs, are indispensable to presentation on stage'*  
Laban : 1980

This holistic interplay between the arts is celebrated in the *Suffolk Youth Theatre* style, through an ensemble of intelligent performers who are skilled, confident and informed in each area. Recognising these needs I consciously employ Laban's Movement Principles to inform our work. I want the company to gain an experiential understanding of Laban's work which will inform every aspect of their performance and form the basis of a shared theatrical language.

*'A good company of actors, singers and dancers undoubtedly succeeds in making the spectator understand more than he actually sees and hears.'*  
Laban: 1980

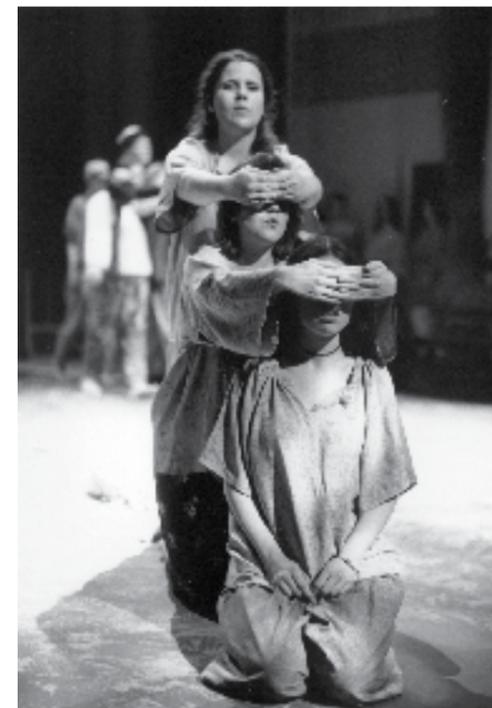
Laban's Movement Principles help us identify the intention within every gesture, every action and every word, and thus prevent the mechanical reproduction of stereotypical responses.

There are many ways a director could approach the task of generating an ensemble with a shared theatrical language – I have chosen a movement approach underpinned by Laban's work. When I read the text my initial reaction is to visualise it. A series of images appear in my mind's eye together with a rhythm of movements, shapes and structures. These are the visual seeds from which the overall performance concepts arise

and they are the key to building the performance. To realise these images, *Laban's Movement Analysis* provides a logical, consistent yet flexible framework to underpin the work.

As one of this year's SYT company says: *'The movement and singing rely on your senses and affect you a lot more deeply than just words. I think the physical way in can give you somewhere a lot deeper to start from.'*

An important aspect of SYT's theatrical language is the relationship between the spoken word and movement as a way of revealing the inner life of a character. At times this will be a complimentary relationship in which voice and gesture work together to illuminate thought and feeling, at other times 'what?' and 'how?' words, juxtaposed with a contrasting movement pattern or gesture, can illuminate the



tensions and contradictions in a character's predicament. Laban neatly sums up this approach:

'Movement can say more, for all its shortness, than pages of verbal description'  
Laban: 1980

And the director Sam Mendes also comments on the importance of movement within theatre:

'There is a way of storytelling through action that is not necessarily mute, but is not told through words.'  
Mendes in Alexander,  
1997 : 32

It is this ability to use movement – spatial orientation, energy, timing, gesture, patterns and the relationship to other bodies in the space - as well as words, which I aim to promote among the young performers. It is not dance for the sake of dance, but, as Geraldine Stephenson says:- 'a dance about people interacting in a story'. Laban's Movement Principles enable me to analyse the outcome of our work at any stage in the creative journey and be confident in my evaluation of its appropriateness to the whole. Laban's spatial analysis provides a psychological interpretation of the kinaesthetic relation of the body to the space. It nurtures an architectural perception of the stage space, both in terms of design and also the universal meanings communicated through the placement of bodies within the design.



'The human figure and its gestures are the most powerful source of suggestion on the stage'  
Esslin, 1987

The rehearsal process is one of shared discovery between the director and the company. The director's vision of the piece ensures a consistency of style and thematic content but the actual details of movement, character and words are developed through an organic process of exploration as the director observes the company responses to the unfolding piece and integrates these responses into the emerging product. Throughout this journey, new and unexpected ideas emerge which add a new dimension to the work. My role is one of observer, facilitator and 'creative overseer', allowing individuals an opportunity to respond and identifying those aspects of the response which correspond to the creative vision, drawing them out and moulding them so they can be assimilated into the whole. At the same time I am open to new ideas which do not necessarily correspond to the original vision but actually change it, twist it and take it into new and previously unconsidered realms. This is exciting and liberating as the emerging piece becomes the shared work of the ensemble.

My aim is to develop an ensemble of performers which recognise the interplay between the skills of drama, dance, music and aesthetic design in the exploration and communication of a text. I hope to develop specific skills in dance and theatre relevant to the text without constructing excluding barriers between the disciplines. As Jean Newlove says:

'I see no barrier between acting and dancing. Actors should be able to move naturally into dance if required to do so. Dancers should be able to cross into acting without fear of the spoken word'  
Newlove 1993 : 118

References:  
Esslin, M 1987 The Field of Drama Methuen  
Laban, R 1980 Mastery of Movement 4<sup>th</sup> ed Macdonald and Evans  
Newlove, J 1993 Laban for Actors and Dancers Routledge  
Alexander, C 1997 Caucasian Chalk Circle info pack Theatre de Complicité

### **Company members talk about their experience of being a part of Suffolk Youth Theatre:**

It's a combination of dance, singing and acting and they are all woven together – they're not just plonked in!

When I joined SYT, the cast was of vastly varying ages and yet I have never felt so comfortable, working closely and intimately in a professional environment. SYT gives you so many chances and opportunities, such as working in a dedicated team, meeting new people, learning more about a variety of interpretations of a play and developing your skills across the range of acting, music and movement. SYT has brought fun, enjoyment and passion into my love for acting and has prepared me for the journey that lies ahead.

Sarah Impey 'Yerma' company 2006

The production of 'Oliver Twist' 2005 gave me an insight into the way in which professional performances are produced. Everyone in the group learnt that to make the performances effective, we would have to work as a team. This didn't just go for the acting itself and the onstage work, but also all the behind stage work. It also became apparent that setting our props was just as important as remembering our lines. Once we had got past the initial shock and nerves of being onstage at the Wolsey Theatre, during the next few performances we learnt to relax and really enjoy what we were doing.

The fact that we had all put a lot of energy and hard work into our rehearsals, meant that when we received good feedback after the performances, we felt immensely proud of what we had made.  
Kate Nuedecker 'Yerma' Company 2006

'Yerma' is the fifth production I have taken part in with Suffolk Youth Theatre. Over the last five years I have had the opportunity to play a real variety of different roles – this year I play the fiery and enigmatic 'Pagan Woman in 'Yerma'. More importantly each year I have remained a valuable member of the ensemble. The productions are usually chorus based and each and every one of the twenty-something team plays a fundamental part in the production process. The time I have spent working with SYT has proved utterly invaluable. The productions are always of a professional standard and the company is renowned within the area. As a member of the group you need to be extremely focused and dedicated. I am thrilled with the attributes I have attained through working with the company. In my drama studies at school I am much more focused and now show versatility in acting through the different roles I have played. When devising work outside of rehearsals I am brimming with ideas and inspiration. I have gained insights into the craft of great playwrights such as Shakespeare, Brecht and now, Lorca.

When I first joined the company I hadn't encountered many aspects of dance. Through working with SYT I have become more confident with my movement on stage. We have studied the work and ethics of Rudolf Laban and discovered where the movement we incorporate into each production originates. Through participating in a workshop with the Laban Guild, each member of the group agreed that this form of movement is imperative to the company in the way in which the plays



are devised, and will prove highly valuable to us in the future. 'Yerma' is my final production with SYT. Next year I plan to study a degree in drama and theatre arts. My experience of working at such a professional level on a variety of plays has proved vital throughout the audition and interview process. I feel the time I have spent with SYT will be invaluable and crucial to me in the future. I have been able to meet and work with others with similar interests, learn about theatre – and have a lot of fun.

Amy Letman – 'Yerma' Company 2006

### **Past productions**

- 1995 'Metamorphosis' by Steven Berkoff, Northgate Arts Centre, Ipswich
- 1996 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle' by Bertolt Brecht, Northgate Arts Centre, Ipswich
- 1997 'Cymbeline' by William Shakespeare, The Wolsey Studio, Ipswich
- 1998 'Blood Wedding' by Lorca, The Wolsey Studio, Ipswich
- 1999 'The Visit' by Frederich Durrenmatt, Northgate Arts Centre, Ipswich
- 2000 'The Turning Tide - Stories from the Sea' The Millenium Dome, London. The Corn Exchange, Ipswich
- 2001 'The Jungle Book' by Rudyard Kipling, The New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich
- 2002 'A Wilde Affair - the stories of Oscar Wilde' The New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich
- 2003 'Romeo and Juliet' by William Shakespeare, The New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich
- 2004 'The Good Person of Sichuan' by Bertolt Brecht, The New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich
- 2005 'Oliver Twist' by Charles Dickens, The New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich

### **Some Highlights**

2001 The reopening of the New Wolsey Theatre in 2001 gave Suffolk Youth theatre the opportunity to perform in one of the regions leading theatre spaces and we are delighted to have established an ongoing relationship with the theatre and its audiences. Our productions at the theatre have played to capacity audiences.

2000 In Millennium year, Suffolk Youth Theatre was selected to represent the County of Suffolk in the 'Our Town's Story' celebration of young people and the Arts. Funded by McDonalds and Suffolk County Council, SYT devised a version of local legend - 'The Wild Man of Orford' - fusing elements of drama, dance, music, film and design to tell the story in the Millennium Dome. The piece was premiered in the internationally acclaimed Snape Concert Hall before its London showing and was subsequently performed at the Ipswich Corn Exchange.

2003 SYT's ongoing relationship with the Laban Guild, who promotes the movement philosophy of genius Rudolf Laban, culminated in a weekend conference in April 2003 in Ipswich, hosted by Suffolk Youth Theatre and the Laban Guild. Experienced dance and theatre practitioners from the world of film, radio, cabaret, theatre and dance who had worked with Rudolf Laban and Joan Littlewood ('O What a lovely War'), came together with the young people of SYT and local teachers for a series of lectures and movement workshops exploring Laban's work and its application in theatre and dance.

2004 - Walli Meier leads an inspirational workshop for SYT focusing on Effort and how the Effort actions can be applied to the communication of powerful emotions in the performance of 'Yerma'

2006 - SYT are invited to present an extract of the current production 'Yerma' at the Laban Guild's special AGM at Surrey University. Many of the young people who have participated in Suffolk Youth Theatre go on to pursue a training in the performing arts, dance or theatre and then into a career in the professional theatre.





working together with commitment towards a performance. The fruits of my labour, and any proof of the success of the course, were produced just before Christmas. I had signed my group up to a project called *DAiR* to ... This stands for *Dance Artists in Residence*, and involves a group of 4 dancers being employed by the *Dance Exchange* in Birmingham, to create and perform a piece, and to take workshops in participating schools. As part of this venture, my groups worked on three pieces to perform at the



Where I go next is in the lap of the Gods, but then I just have to have faith. I would never have guessed back in 1997, what the future had in store. So is there life after the *Laban Leaders Courses*? You bet there is!

*Dee Stott*

Photos: Year 10 and 11 *Certificate of Achievement* and *Foundation Studies* working hard and enjoying themselves at the *DaiR* to... workshop.

show. It was such hard work, nail biting stuff, the dance being the least of my problems, it was dealing with absence due to exclusions, truancy, isolation that was the real challenge!

### Such Pride!

Friday the 9<sup>th</sup> December came; I had managed to persuade teachers to allow my students to have the day off lessons (not many of them are on target!) to rehearse in the morning, workshop in the afternoon, show in the evening! Out of 29, two students didn't show at all, all but another two managed to complete the afternoon's workshop - which was brilliant. My students performed brilliantly. I was so stunned by their performance that the camera, with which I had planned to take photos for this article, lay redundant on the floor! The teachers who came to see the show were truly amazed at the performances. For many of the students it was their first taste of success, and praise from teachers. I was so proud of them - I felt I was going to burst, but more importantly they were so proud of themselves. Their self-evaluation of performance skills, from watching the video of the show, made a great final lesson at the end of last term.

### The Future

So why is this probably my last year? I reach the age of 51 this year; arthritis has been diagnosed in my knees and I have discovered *Newton's 4<sup>th</sup> Law of Motion* - Gravity increases in direct proportion to age! It is time for me to step aside and make room for a younger person to take over. I have achieved my target, I am a dance teacher, and in the process I have resurrected a dying department, and have spread the word of the *Laban courses* far and wide.

directed teaching. All but 3 interviewees had a teaching qualification (though not necessarily in dance) and/or worked with groups using dance or creative movement. This was not through deliberate sampling and probably reflects the attributes and experience of people involved in *Laban work*. People told me about their first experiences of being asked to work with other people to create a movement piece and about how things have changed since then. The first experience for some was many years ago in a community setting; for others it was more recent.

I wanted to relate my findings to existing research but found it difficult to find reports of related studies and would be interested to hear of any. There is much more research on group dynamics in business and management settings but this report is solely a summary of the main findings from my interviews. Contributors have been anonymously identified by numbers after quotes.

### Simple Instructions - Confusing

I came across 3 people who had initially expected to be given a prescribed repertoire of moves. They found seemingly simple instructions quite frightening. They didn't know what to do and wanted to leave the class

*'Just move, go into a circle' - I was embarrassed....feel your feet on the earth' - what does that mean? (2) 'Walk round the room' - what does that mean? - I needed someone to tell me what to do (7) It would help if the teacher said 'we're all different - participate in the way you want to' (2)*

### How people like to get into groups

*As a total stranger its easier to be put in a group than find a group (3)*

*It's better if they [teachers] don't say 'choose' a partner, but 'find a partner' or 'work with someone near you. There is no choice if you are last' (4)*

*The teacher could make it easier if they say 'just turn to the person next to you' or 'everyone is fine to work with' (5)*

Some people preferred having the control taken from them altogether such as when the teacher uses a random numbering process to make groups. Unless a method like this was used, most people, as they got familiar with each other, chose who they worked with however the instruction was phrased. Choice was based on how they felt the movement relationship would be. Others had no sense of actively choosing but most people were reluctant to work with those they found to be rigid in their ideas.

### Preferred group size

For most people there was broadly a straightforward correlation between group size and difficulties - the smaller the group the fewer the difficulties. The difficulties mainly related to decision-making and reaching consensus.

However there was a difference in people's preference for working in twos (pairs) and threes. For some the above correlation applied so that twos were easier than threes and for the same reasons. Also twos were sometimes preferred as a way of getting to know people in a new group.

Others preferred working in threes:

*With three it is more dynamic. With a pair you end up agreeing with one another and produce something less challenging. With three you get different opinions. With two there is probably fear of head to head disagreement so you agree but with three it opens it up (12)*

*There is more pressure with one other person, a partner, rather than a group (9)*

*With a partner I can feel like I'm letting them down (2)*

*In pairs its you and them. The relationship is more focussed on how you get on (6)*

*With pair work its more difficult to get an even balance in decision- making] (1)*

While one person felt more exposed, and therefore less likely to contribute in a large group, another felt more anonymous

*in a bigger group I find it easier to add my ideas (7)*

### Being in a group

*Emotions:* There was a range of emotions experienced by most people but, not surprisingly, people responded to them differently

*I can feel misunderstood, angry, but I get over it quickly as a pupil (4)*

*I've never felt misunderstood. I have felt that I've had a vision and others haven't felt the same but its not a big deal (5)*

*If I have an idea I'll say it but I'm worried I'll look stupid, that it'll be dismissed - I fear ridicule. It hasn't happened yet but I still feel like that (8)*

*I can feel excessively proud and excessively ashamed (9)*

Interviewees' anxieties included the fear of not understanding what was being asked, that their ideas would not be respected, that people would hold back and not contribute, that they would run out of time, that agreement would not be reached and that they wouldn't produce anything of value.

### Dominance

This was a key issue. Some people assumed there would be a leader, or leaders. Others were uncomfortable with this

*I can start wondering if ... the burden of compromising is equally shared (9)*

and strived to make the group less hierarchical. They had strategies for making sure everyone's voice was heard.

*I try to support the more quiet ones to bring in their ideas -look at this gesture, could we all do that?' (10)*

Those who liked having leaders felt it made things easier, particularly in large groups.

### Sharing Ideas

Some people deferred to those they perceived to be more experienced. Others had a different perspective:

*Yes I feel people are holding back. This is frustrating ...If they contribute this is another learning opportunity for me, whatever their dance experience. Imagination is not attached to dancing ability. (11)*

*If you hear ambiguity in what the teacher says maybe its because you have more ideas. Those who come in with ideas first are more likely to be heard. I might be thinking of different options and which one to choose, or what does the teacher mean, but maybe people who come in first with ideas have only had one idea and that is the one that gets done (9)*

### Suggested Teacher Input

People were asked if they thought the teacher could do anything to make working in groups a more positive experience. Most people felt it would help if the teacher was explicit about everyone's contribution being valuable whatever their previous experience.

*At a workshop I run I say there is no right or wrong, just the preciousness of them expressing themselves (6)*

There were also suggestions that teachers could encourage

## Reflections on Working in a Group in a Community Dance Setting

*(Mary Ellen Coyte qualified on the Laban Guild Community Dance Teachers' Course. She is a free-lance researcher, working in service development in health and mental health, and is currently training as a chaplaincy assistant at the Maudesley Psychiatric Hospital in South London. Dance for her is an expression of spirituality and a resource for good mental health.)*

Last year I was a participant on the Guild's *Community Dance Teachers' Course* in Essex. Prior to this I had been on 3 *LinC Summer Schools* and it was this experience which seduced me on to the teachers' course.

One thing I valued from my very first experience of *Laban* was working in small groups to create a movement piece - the chance to indulge the creative juices and the chance to work with other people. However, it was also something which I found provoked a lot of anxiety. The whole business of getting on with other people in this way still puts a knot in my stomach.

When I started the dance course I was surprised that this wasn't addressed at all. Just like on the summer schools we were asked to 'get into groups and make something', as if it was a skill acquired like breathing. I decided to see if I was alone with my fears. My aim was to find out more about what others thought about working in groups so that, as a teacher, I would have more idea of what my students might be thinking, and how the experience could be made as positive as possible for them. I also wanted to share what I found out with anyone who might be interested.

Information was gathered through interviewing 12 people using a semi-structured questionnaire. This type of questionnaire encourages people to talk freely about a given topic. Interviewees were drawn from participants on the teachers' course (9) and the *LinC 2005 Summer School* (3). Participants ranged in age between 27 and 70 and all but one were women. If people had previous experience as dance students it was mainly through

groups to make sure everyone had a chance to speak and was listened to, either through words or exercises. A few felt any changes came through personal experience and that students didn't listen to what the teacher said. The importance of teacher as role model was mentioned.

*You pick up lots from the teacher as a role model: how they say your name – with respect; how they turn the music on – loud; if they seem to be chaotic or enter the room in a calm way. (4)*

There was a strong belief that groups worked most smoothly when teaching was clear and highly structured and that the teacher was available to answer queries.

Two people acknowledged the difficulties of verbal communication.

*What I'd love is for it to be structured so (decision-making in groups) wasn't verbal (9)*

#### Showing work to the group

All respondents saw value in this. Most really liked it although two still found it a bit nerve-racking.

#### Participation in questionnaire

Comments on this were positive: *It was useful to think and have*

*a verbal reflective tool (12)*

People said the experience encouraged them to think more about the way they teach and the way they are in a group.

#### Personal Reflections

I am aware that this is a very limited piece of research, not least because my pre-existing and continuing relationship with the participants could affect what they disclose. I have not drawn any conclusions in this summary but hope that others find it useful. The responses raise questions which could be addressed through more research. For example, would knowing more about the processes which operate when a minority want a leader and others are trying to facilitate cooperative decision-making, help to make working in a group a more positive, creative experience?

(Mary is hoping to facilitate movement workshops in mental health settings and would be pleased to hear from anyone with similar interests or experience. If you would like to contact her about issues raised in this article please do).

email: maryellen.coyte@virgin.net

*Mary Ellen Coyte*

# LABAN

#### NEWS RELEASE

30 January 2006

Hundreds flocked to Laban as the BBC held their popular 'Strictly Dance Fever' auditions with celebrity presenter Graham Norton

Graham Norton is back on the road looking for new contestants to compete in the second series to be broadcast this year. Auditions are held all over the country and last weekend the London auditions took place at Laban, Europe's leading contemporary dance conservatoire.

Laban were delighted to host the 2006 auditions; a prime location in an awe-inspiring landmark building at the heart of South East London's thriving arts community. Laban brings together students, choreographers, designers, writers, researchers, artists and musicians from across the world, and is also available for corporate hire.

Laban's Event Manager Samantha Lacey commented: "We were thrilled to host the 2006 Strictly Dance Fever auditions. The BBC felt that with 13 air-conditioned dance studios, warm-up areas and changing facilities there was no doubt that Laban was the perfect location. Plus we have a café which was ideal for the hundreds of parents and friends that waited patiently throughout the long auditions. It was a very successful weekend!"



Photo by Merlin Hendy

The tough panel of judges; Arlene Phillips, Stacey Hayes, Ben Richards (famous for his role as 'Bruno' in Footballers' Wives) and Wayne Sleep judged hundreds of contestants, many of whom were local, dancing all sorts of styles (from Salsa to Street, Latin to Lindyhop and Ballroom to Body popping!), whilst celebrity

Graham Norton spent his time interviewing and looking after the hopeful auditionees.

For further information or images please contact Laura Riches, Laban Arts Press Manager on 020 8469 9523 or email: l.riches@laban.org



Transitions: top 'lead' and above 'lift'  
Photos by Merlin Hendy



Company L-Z 'Throat'  
Photo by Chris Parkin and Eric Richmond

## REPORT FROM THE COURSES OFFICER

The Essex Community Dance Teachers Course ended in November with a highly successful weekend of dance. Congratulations to David Barber, Mary Ellen Coyte, Ruth Downie, Faith Fox, Jenny Haycocks, Joanne Knappek, Jenny Kuper, Jenny Moir, Julie Weston, Rebecca Willshire and Sophie Wood. Three other course members expect to complete the course shortly. The standards reached were very high and thanks go to both students and tutors for all their hard work – and our thanks also to the Guild members who came to support them over the week end by taking part in their sessions. We wish them luck in their future careers and hope to be seeing more of them.

The next course will be run in conjunction with Kildare Arts Officer, Lucina Russell, and will commence on the 8/9 April at Riverbank Arts Centre in Newtown, Co Kildare. Anyone interested in applying for a place should contact Lucina at [lrussell@kildarecoco.ie](mailto:lrussell@kildarecoco.ie) or (00353)(0)45 431 109

We are also hoping to start a course in conjunction with RCT Community Arts in September, based in S Wales. Anyone interested in further details should contact the Courses Officer at [annonhols@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:annonhols@hotmail.co.uk) or the Chair of the Training Committee, Janet Lunn, at [janetattw@aol.com](mailto:janetattw@aol.com).

Our congratulations also go to Louise Costelloe, who has just



been appointed Dance Artist in Residence for Wigtownshire. Louise, who recently won the Dance Appreciation Award, says that it was definitely the fact that she had completed the Laban Guild Community Dance Teachers Courses which gained her the job. We wish her every success.

If you find that our courses have helped you to gain work in the profession, please let us know.

Meanwhile, our teachers continue to find our Foundation Course and Graded Certificate schemes of work for children extremely helpful. Details are available from the Courses Officer or Chair of the Training Committee, as above.

Our main tasks for 2006 are to develop a range of Continued Professional Development Courses to suit all our members, and to seek wider accreditation.

With very best wishes for 2006,

*Ann Ward.*

Courses Officer for the Laban Guild

## DANCE MOVEMENT THERAPY – Short Courses 2006

### Body-Mind Centering Workshops

#### The Evolution of Movement/ The Developmental Process

Saturday/Sunday – 8-9 April 2006,  
10.00am - 5.00pm

Fee: £220.00

#### Body Systems, Body Rhythms, Living Anatomy of the Bones and Organs

Saturday/Sunday – 6-7 May 2006,  
10.00am - 5.00pm

Fee: £220.00

You can attend these two workshops as a package or individually. They will be taught by Sharna Travers Smith – a certified BMC® teacher. You do not need any prior knowledge. Each workshop offers an introduction to the field of Body-Mind Centering, Bodywork and DMT, and will deepen your knowledge of yourself and the human body in movement.

### Introduction to Dance Movement Therapy

Saturday/Sunday – 29-30 April 2006,  
10.00am - 5.00pm

Fee: £220.00

This workshop will provide basic information and some personal experience of DMT as therapy and as a professional training. Ideal for those from the Health Professions, eg, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, nursing, general medical practice and psychiatry, teaching, social work, community services, youth work, etc.

### Dance Movement Therapy Summer School

Tuesday 11 July - Friday 14 July 2006,  
9.30am - 4.30pm

Fee: £455.00

This four-day course offers an in-depth introduction to the field of DMT and provides you with a personal experience of the medium alongside seminars on the theory and practice of DMT. The course will be facilitated by Susan Scarth, Lecturer and Course Leader of the MA DMT at Goldsmiths with additional input from practising DMTs in the health and education sectors.

### OTHER PROGRAMMES

We also offer an MA in Dance Movement Therapy, the qualification to practice as a dance movement therapist. Study full or part-time starting in September 2006.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

For an enrolment form, please visit [www.goldsmiths.ac.uk](http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk) or contact Admissions tel 020 7919 7766, e-mail [admissions@gold.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@gold.ac.uk) or write to AEU, Goldsmiths College, University of London, New Cross, London SE14 6NW.

If you have specific questions, please contact Susan Scarth, e-mail [s.scarth@gold.ac.uk](mailto:s.scarth@gold.ac.uk) or the relevant support staff on 020 7919 7230.

## MARCH

Thursday 2 March 19:30 WORLD PREMIERE

Lapsus Corpi: wish + qish

LABAN Creekside Box Office 020 8469 9500

Thursday 2 March - Saturday 4 March

Phoenix Dance Theatre

Sadler's Wells

Enquiries 020 7771 2000

Saturday 11 March

Laban Guild AGM Diamond Jubilee Celebrations

Surrey University, Guildford

Contact: Jill Goff Tel: 01483 763214

email [jill\\_goff100@hotmail.com](mailto:jill_goff100@hotmail.com)

Monday 20 March - Tuesday 21 March 19:30

Laban students in performance part 1: Mixed Bill

LABAN Creekside Box Office 020 8469 9500

Wednesday 22 March 19:30

Laban students in performance part 2: Mixed Bill

LABAN Creekside Box Office 020 8469 9500

## APRIL

Saturday 1 April 15:30 and 18:30

Pick up the Pace + Laban Youth Programme

LABAN Creekside Box Office 020 8469 9500

Saturday 8 - Sunday 9 April

Laban Guild Community Dance Teachers

Course, Newbridge, Co Kildare, Ireland

Contact Lucina Russell, [lrussell@kildarecoco.ie](mailto:lrussell@kildarecoco.ie)

Tuesday 25 April EUROPEAN PREMIERE

Troika Ranch: 16 [R]evolutions

LABAN Creekside Box Office 020 8469 9500

## MAY

Wednesday 3 - Friday 5 May 19:30

Friday 5 May 14:00

Transitions Dance Company: Mixed Bill

LABAN Creekside Box Office 020 8469 9500

Tuesday 30 - Wednesday 31 May 19:30

Bock & Vincenzi: Here, As If They Hadn't Been,  
As If They Are Not LABAN

LABAN Creekside Box Office 020 8469 9500

## Rambert's Spring Tour 2006

includes Merce Cunningham's 'Pond Way', former Rambert Artistic Director Christopher Bruce's 'Steel Garden' as well as the classic Olivier Award-winning 'Swamp' by Michael Clark, Mark Baldwin's 'Constant Speed' and Kim Brandstrup's 'Songs of a Wayfarer' amongst others.

Friday 24 - Saturday 25 February 2006

[Snape Maltings Concert Hall, Suffolk](#)

Wednesday 1 - Thursday 2 March 2006

[Hall for Cornwall, Truro](#)

Tuesday 14 - Friday 17 March 2006

[Clwyd Theatr Cymru, Mold](#)

Wednesday 22 - Saturday 25 March 2006

[Theatre Royal Brighton](#)

Tuesday 23 - Saturday 27 May 2006

[Sadler's Wells, London](#)

## Laban Based Dance Classes

### Belfast, Crescent Arts Centre

Monday:

4.45pm - 5.45pm Crescent Youth Dance

5.45pm - 6.45pm Adult Movement and Dance

Contact:

**Brenda McKee** 25 Malone Hill Park Belfast  
BT9 6RE email: [brendagm@aol.com](mailto:brendagm@aol.com)

### Bromley

Wednesday afternoons and Thursday mornings  
Community Dance classes for people with  
learning difficulties

Contact:

**Avril Hitman** 020 8467 3331

### Cambridge

Wednesday mornings over 55s - open class

Contact:

**Maddy Tongue** 01223 302030

### Swindon

Saturday mornings, three separate classes for  
4-5 years, 6-8 years, 9-13 years

Contact:

**Kathy Geddes** 02793 463210

### Burghfield Common, Berkshire

Workshops at Garlands Junior School

First Sunday of the month 10:30 am to 4 pm

Contact:

**Gill Hibbs** 01189 616903

**Jenny Nicholson** 01189 662833

Email: [gillian.hibbs1@virgin.net](mailto:gillian.hibbs1@virgin.net)

*Amanda Banks*



*James McBride*



*Phoenix Project: Enid Platt's Legacy  
led by Anna Carlisle*

*Irma Kort*



*Dawn Turner*

