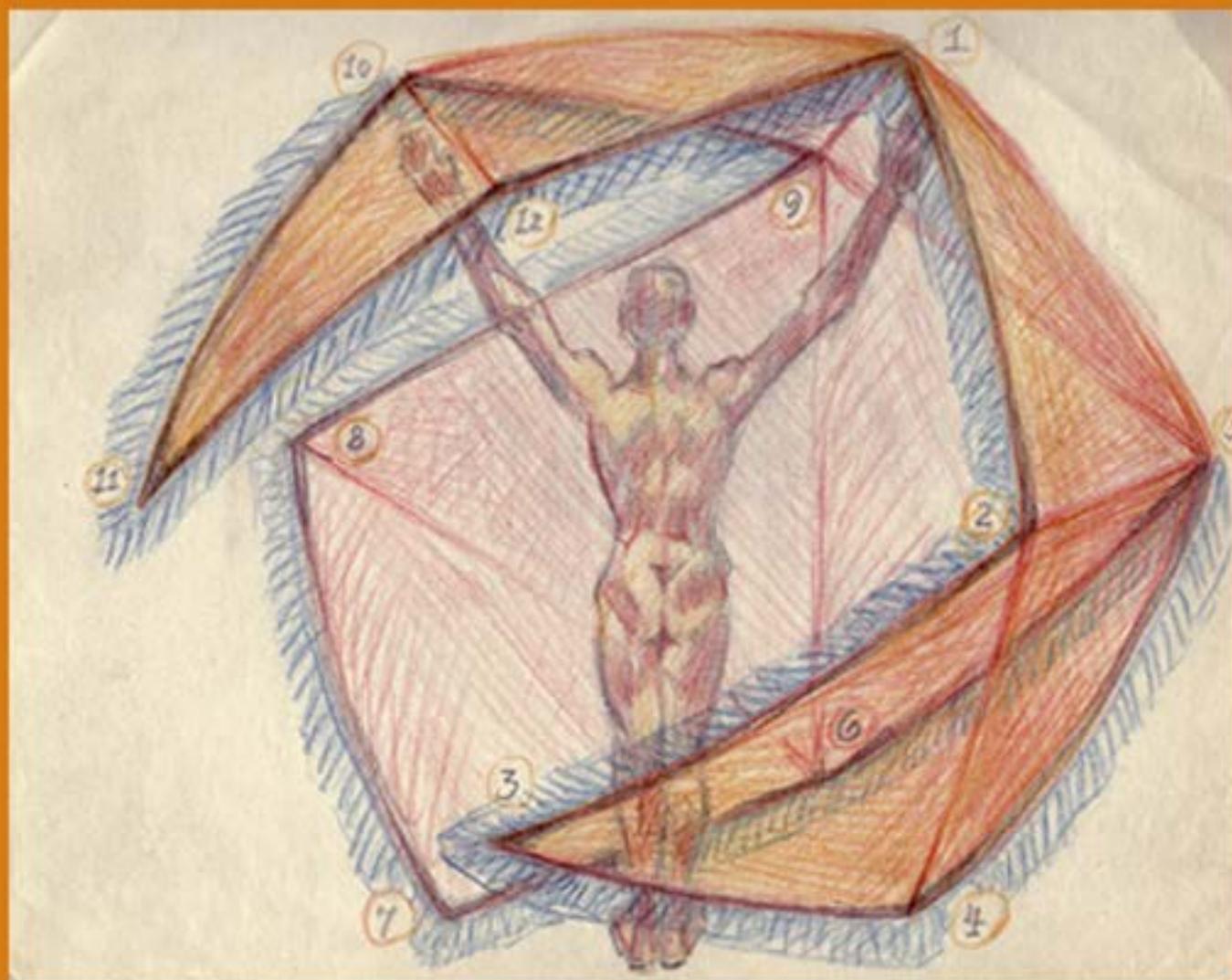


Movement & Dance



Quarterly magazine of the Laban Guild
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Coloured figure in icosahedron
(DVD: Living Architecture - Rudolf
Laban and the Geometry of Dance)

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Editorial

This Summer issue contains many colourful accounts of a memorable AGM day at *The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art* held on 21st March 2009 - accounts from non-members, as well as new and existing members. Contributors include: Tracy Collier, Sadie Hunt, Cathy Washbrook, Maggie Killingbeck and Dr Ann Hutchinson Guest - to whom we are most indebted.

One reviewer of the day, refers to the 'bombshell' created by our President Anna Carlisle MBE when in her address she proposed a 'change of name for the Guild'. Council will doubtless be debating this issue, but in the meantime, your Magazine would welcome the expression of views from members at large in the form of short articles or letters to the Editor for publication in our next issue.

Bearing in mind Laban's involvement in Drama as a form of artistic expression, the AGM *RADA* day, with its sub-focus on dramatic movement, must to many seem long overdue. Darren Royston's Workshop at the AGM on the application of Laban's '*Door of Adoration*', '*Table of Benediction*' and '*Wheel of Submission*' (referred to in our Winter 2008 edition) was again welcomed - as was Brigid Panet's exposition at the AGM of 'Laban as an Essential Skill for Actors', reported in these pages. Brigid's new book: *Essential Acting; a handbook for actors, teachers and directors* will be highly regarded.

We continue to be fascinated by Dr Jenny Elliott's research into 'Laban-based Dance Community within Healthcare environments' - as we are by William Elmhirst's 'Patrons' Questiontime' (our benefactors seldom receive all the credit they richly deserve)!

Dr Alan Salter's 'Practical Aesthetics' reminds us that Aesthetics, as a branch of philosophy, has valuable applications, whilst Sally Archbutt's amazing and penetrating exploration of Laban's choreutics highlights the '7 Rings' - 'the very special ring for Laban' (see DVD reviews also).

The arrival of DVDs to illuminate Laban's philosophy and practice is always an important event, and the production of *Living Architecture - Rudolf Laban and the Geometry of Dance* by Anna Carlisle and Valerie Preston-Dunlop, is no exception - although it will doubtless give rise to much scepticism. Nevertheless, a knowledge of Laban's underlying 'spirituality' is vital to the fullest understanding of his theory and practice. We have, therefore, provided extended reviews and commentaries on this DVD (including those of the Editor, Sally Archbutt, Dawn Turner and Amanda Banks), and it is hoped that readers will respond with their own critical/appreciative comments for publication.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Dr Dorothy Madden - by whom many of us were tutored; Valerie Preston-Dunlop extols her monumental contribution to dance. Valerie's own lifetime award carries with it our congratulations and Walli Meier's reminder of Laban's educational heritage is salutary.

The appointment of Sadie Hunt as our Events and Listings Correspondent is a great joy to the Editor and it is only to be hoped that this will be the first of many newly appointed Correspondents who will ease the role of the Editor.

Gordon Curl

Front Cover :
Coloured figure in icosahedron with numbers (NRC Reference L/E/15/56). From the Rudolf Laban Archive held at the National Resource Centre for Dance, University of Surrey ©

President's Address

(Anna Carlisle MBE MA, addresses the Annual General Meeting on 21 March 2009 at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, proposing - dramatically - that the Guild should consider changing its name!) Ed.

For some years now, Council has been alert to the lack of new applications for Guild membership and to an apparent decline of interest in the UK in Laban's extraordinary contribution to the understanding of the many fields of Movement and Dance. It is certainly the case that Laban Fundamentals as a pedagogy for Dance Education have disappeared from the State Education System.

However, if the members here today have undertaken to read the range of Annual Reports published by the Council Officers this year, they will have appreciated that over the last three years, Council has been working to address the problem. A considerable amount of work has been undertaken - both in the evaluation and rationalisation of current Guild activities and in the setting up and supporting of new initiatives to promote and regenerate interest in Laban's work. These are well reported in our excellent magazine - but I wish to underline a number of significant events and initiatives which point to a potentially hopeful and potentially exciting future picture.

Some of you will have seen illustrations of the work produced by the group of young practitioners involved in the *Phoenix Project* - the Professional Development Course in Laban Studies - at last year's AGM at Bedford. They meet for a final weekend in April for further studies and a discussion of the way forward. In Summer 2008, our Chair initiated a research project at

Bedford University designed to introduce Laban Analysis to a selected group of young Dance teachers in the State system. The successful outcomes of the project have led to the creation of an MA Module in Laban Studies at Bedford with around 12 participants and a start date next month.



Throughout last year, the Guild was involved in the 2008 Laban celebrations initiated by Valerie Preston Dunlop in Manchester, Dartington and the 4-day Conference in October at LABAN in London. The high numbers of participants at these very successful events indicated a real groundswell of interest in Laban's work amongst the many delegates taking part. As a consequence, in addition to the planning of two Community Dance Leaders Courses in Suffolk and Sussex this year, Council is planning a series of one-day workshops for the coming year. These will address the fields of drama, dance education, recreative dance and movement observation.

Finally, and to bring us up to date - the inspiration of Laban's work to a new generation of practitioners, I think will be evidenced today - firstly by the popular response to our theme here at *RADA* - 'Laban as an Inspiration for Current Theatre Practice' - and secondly, and perhaps more importantly - by the enthusiasm of a number of young practitioners recently inspired by courses in Laban Studies, who are about to be elected on to the Guild Council.

Before I conclude, however, I wish to make a proposal. This is not entirely original but I believe it to be important for consideration by the members. I have over many years tried to encourage the hosts of young people I have worked with to join the Guild. I have not been successful. Feedback from them has been consistently similar: the name - the Guild - sounds very grand and very old-fashioned. It's not attractive to young people. I therefore wish to propose that for the future of the Guild - the membership should consider this year a change of name.

I wish you all a productive and exciting day.

Anna Carlisle



Anna Carlisle addresses AGM delegates at RADA

Photo: Pete Killingbeck

The Versatility of Laban's Work

(Tracy Collier MA, recounts her experiences at the Guild's AGM day at RADA. Tracy is Head of Movement at East 15 Drama School Essex University and an actress who has appeared in UK Theatres and the West End. Tracy completed an MA at the Laban Centre and has been a director and choreographer; she is now Artistic Director of her own Company – Time4Change Theatre - having made various vocal recording and written the book for three short musicals. Before joining East 15 she was Senior Tutor in musical theatre, dance and movement at GSA). Ed



It was the first AGM, or indeed Laban Guild meeting that I have ever attended, so I was very keen to get as much as I could out of the day. I had also brought with me 28 students from East 15 drama school, which has very close links and strong ties with the work of Laban - especially through Jean Newlove who worked with Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop. And it is Joan Littlewood's Theatre

Workshop which has been the beginnings and continued ethos of the school.

The AGM started with a bit of a bombshell from the President Anna Carlisle MBE, who suggested that the Guild change its name to encourage more young people into the society to promote and develop Laban's work as a theatre practice. I was greatly encouraged and delighted that the older members of the Guild took this proposal completely in their stride and indeed provided the proposer and seconder for the motion. It was, for me, another affirmation of the broadmindedness Laban has brought to so many of those who have studied his work. His work has certainly opened my eyes to so many possibilities and made me very conscious of the richness achieved by challenging 'the way things are'. I was also delighted to see so many faces from the Laban Conference, which was held at the LABAN back in October last year where, again, ideas were shared and explored in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect.

My first encounter with Rudolf Laban's work was on my MA in European Dance Theatre Practice at the LABAN where 'Laban's Principles and Practice' were main components of the course. On that course was a delightful young lady, Ali Curtis-Jones. She was already a tutor at the LABAN but was developing her own practice. Ali and I have also worked together since the course, so it was a huge pleasure for me to attend her lecture on the recreation of Laban's



Green Clowns along with an unpacking of the use of his technique work in weight/space/time and flow. Ali was beautifully clear about how the technique informed the process of recreation and performance, and certainly my own students found this direct application extremely useful and something they could take back to their own studies at East 15. Laban is a fundamental part of their training and it was reassuring for them to see other teachers and practitioners using it in such a live and applicable manner. For me the purpose of taking the students, was to allow them to encounter directly the work of Jean Newlove, as one of their required reading books is Jean's *Laban for Actors*. They did both of her workshops and it was so exciting to see them engaging openly and fully with other students, and also those who were colleagues of Jean, whom she had working alongside, giving us a clear insight into the freedom within a structure which was so much part of Laban's practice. We worked on a massive machine which was primed to go wrong at one point and then be repaired, only to fall silent through complete failure at the end. Jean explained that she had created this machine for Laban at a course and that he had liked it very much. It was fantastic to have an entire room of people working together on something that was dependant on us all. Whatever happened in one part of the machine eventually had implications elsewhere.



Jean Newlove directs her 'massive machine'
Photos: Pete Killingbeck

The second workshop was melodrama in which the archetypes were given specific efforts and we were encouraged to improvise the characters using each given effort quality. This gave far more freedom to develop character from an effort than certainly my students, being only first years, have been allowed to have so far in their training, and this is something that we develop into practice in their second year. But it was lovely for them to start running a little ahead of schedule.

I did not get to the other workshops but I know that Ali Curtis-Jones workshop on the recreation of *Green Clowns* will have been meticulous in detail and very inspirational. I have worked with Ali on this recreation myself so am aware of the way she works. I had also been privy to Darren Royston's work at the Laban Conference so knew yet again what a delight that workshop will have been, and I was promised by my colleague from East 15, who did attend that workshop, a run down of what sounded like a lively and fun investigation into Laban's work in relation to status, (amongst other things I am sure), and of course Brigid Panet has a long history of lecturing behind her in movement for actors. I was very impressed with the variety of workshops on offer - which again emphasises the versatility of Laban's work.



Demonstrations by
Drama Centre and
RADA students

Photo: Pete
Killingbeck

The day was rounded off beautifully by demonstrations from *Drama Centre* and *RADA* students who had been working with efforts in various ways including text based work and also by a lively Q&A with the panel made up of workshop leaders from the day, expertly chaired by Anna Carlisle. It was good for my students to hear debate at this level and to understand that not all need to be in agreement on the finer details of work but the main focus. Understanding and commitment to keeping Rudolf Laban's work in the forefront of our theatrical practice is paramount to us all.

Tracy Collier

An Inspiration

(Cathy Washbrook MA, reports on the Lecture Demonstration by Alison Curtis Jones at Laban Guild AGM at RADA on 21st March 2009. Cathy is a freelance dance artist and director of *Dance Vibe* - a dance in Education Company launched in 2007. Cathy trained at LABAN, and has a PGCE in Dance. Since training, she has taken several roles in teaching, performing and choreographing and was Artistic Director of *New Dimensions Dance Theatre*, having performed for several small-scale dance companies in the UK. She has worked as a Dance and Drama teacher and lecturer in secondary and further education - and taught *Dance to undergraduates* at the University of Hertfordshire. Cathy was one of the practitioners on *The Laban Guild Phoenix Project* and is currently engaged in *MA Dance Making and Performance* at Coventry University. She has recently been co-opted onto the *Laban Guild Council*). Ed.



as part of a three- week historical project. The presentation highlighted the usefulness of Laban's principles for emergent dance artists.

Her presentation included a PowerPoint presentation with photographs and visuals of the original work sourced by Valerie Preston Dunlop and demonstrations of the process and use of Laban's principles in the work by Ali and Paola Di Bella, one of her students. Also included in the presentation was an excerpt of the filming of the work in performance. The clarity of the application

of Laban's principles by Ali, and the embodiment of these principles by Paola in her demonstration, was a testament to the teaching and relationship created by teacher and students in the process of re-creating the work.

Ali opened the presentation by providing the context of *The Green Clowns* (1928) led by Ali and utilising the research of Valerie Preston-Dunlop in sourcing the remains of the original work, which was originally received to sensational success. The re-creation draws on undergraduates' study of choreology and choreographic practice through a re-generation of interest in Laban's work, the experience of creating it and performing it, and the application of their studies to performance and re-creation. Ali challenged them physically, creatively and intellectually; students

Alison Curtis Jones, dancer, choreographer and lecturer at Laban Creekside, London, led this year's lecture demonstration. The lecture was an inspiration for members of the Laban Guild and it was presented with professionalism and integrity to Laban's work. The Lecture demonstration was an overview of Ali's direction of the re-creation of Laban's seminal work *Die Grunen Clowns* (1928) at Laban, Creekside with 2nd year Undergraduates



Alison Curtis Jones delivers the Laban
Lecture
Photo: Pete Killingbeck

were asked to verbalise their experiences. Such is the hallmark of her professional practice.

The project informed undergraduates' technique and choreological and choreographic practice through investigation and experience of the technique of the time. It is in this area that Ali applied the principles of Laban's work; three dimensions, planes, scales and rings through a rigorous and challenging technique class. Further investigation of these principles was explored through the application of Choreutics and Eukinetics to the re-creation of *Green Clowns*.

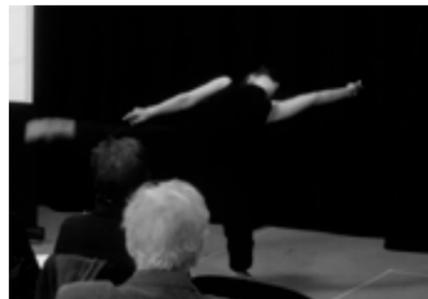
Ali highlighted the relevance of the process of the work as paramount for emergent dance artists as they form their practice in a competitive dance world. Dance artists are required to be "thinking dancers and artists", with an ability to utilise an eclectic mix of techniques and dance styles and draw upon many tools in order to create rich and exciting work. She explained that the phenomenological experience and application of taught principles through the nexus of dance technique, choreology and choreography, can inform this practice.

Ali made an important point that the re-creation was a PROCESS led work which allows students to make informed judgements about the work and their involvement in it. In essence, students are given the opportunity to own their dance material, embody it and alter the ontology of the work, something that may not be possible to the same degree with a reconstructed work. Ali was keen to point out that it was not a reconstruction, which may be reliant on a notated score, but rather the work was literally re-created in the bodies of the students, thus truly phenomenological.

The disappearance of the original work presents an ontological problem: how can a re-creation be authentic to the original work? "Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representation: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance." (Phelan 1993:146). Rather than mourning the passing of the work into oblivion, with the fragments that remain of the original, Ali was able to apply choreological principles and draw on phenomenology of the dancers in the experience of the work and essentially re-create it in the present, thus presenting a solution to the ontological problem of the original work.

Ali explained that improvisation was part of the process, as the performers facilitate the movement, hence providing ownership of the material. Through improvisation she was able to facilitate the students learning by applying the use of the structural model (body, action, space, dynamics and relationships) to enhance the understanding of the students. The power of sensing and intending to the movement is important as they work in relationship with each other. The sensing of the movement is essentially somatic (to the inward body) in order for the students to embody the movement in totality. "Embodiment of movement involves the whole person, a person conscious of being a living body, living that experience, giving intention to the movement material." (Preston-Dunlop, Sanchez-Goldberg 2002:7)

In order to facilitate the embodiment of the work, Ali had prepared the dancers through the application of three dimensionality within the kinesphere (like an aura surrounding the body). Paola Di Bella demonstrated this principle, showing the radiation of the multiple directions from the centre, the breadth, the verticality, and depth and width. This allowed students to inform their practice by questioning and finding the centre for themselves but also of finding the energy pathways from the centre into the body, so in terms of choreology they can locate the nexus of the body in the space and the potentials for these in dance practice.



Paola Di Bella demonstrates



Photos by Pete Killingbeck

To further challenge the students, Ali encouraged them to rupture the natural affinities of movement or choreological order, which she demonstrated by audience participation as part of the presentation.

We were encouraged to question an impulse as an upward movement, or perform a light movement in a downward direction, and explore an impactive movement at different speeds. In encouraging the audience to question the choreological order she illustrated how the students were required not only to apply their choreological knowledge, but also then improvise and find new creative possibilities with this movement material.

In the section of *Green Clowns* entitled 'Maschine' (Machine), Ali applied rhythmic principles, (impulse,



impact, rebound, swing and continuous movement and effort) to enhance the learning experience and to enhance the rhythmical quality of the repetitive gestural movements to give them different emphasis.

In another section entitled 'War', Ali applied Valerie Preston-Dunlop's theory of ChU/Mm (Choreutic Units and their Manner of Materialisation), to enhance the spatial progression of a straight pathway, spatial projection of the dancers toward each other and the spatial tension of the advancing opposing sides; the space becomes electrically charged between the dancers and it could be argued that this is what the audience is drawn to in performative event. The use of body design is important as the students were encouraged to create body shape to communicate the idea of fighting and conflict of war, whilst being mindful of creating body designs using the three planes. Ali had applied Forsythe's notion of super-zoning to the A-scale by encouraging students to go beyond reachable space and further out into general space. She also explored peripheral pathways of the A-scale which encouraged a sense of lability in the movement. This was performed beautifully by Paola as she reached into space we saw the movement potential of the dancer's body.

During the Question and Answer section of the presentation, Ali was able to exemplify how she had encouraged the students to draw on their own experience and emotion to facilitate the demands of the dynamics and expression in different sections of the dance. In finding an emotional hook for the work in 'War', Ali encouraged the students to find inspiration through discussing current topical issues around war, to experience the dead-weight of a body and trying to imagine the decay of a dying body and sharing personal stories, particularly from students who may have experienced war in their lives. More importantly, they were encouraged to question how this section of *Green Clowns* is relevant in the world today.

The physical nature of the dance required the dancers to make use of their voices; they were encouraged to make use of different dynamics through the voice, and the

projection of the voice from inside the body to the outward projection. A drama specialist, Linda Hurst from Trinity, also assisted them. When watching the film excerpt of the work it was evident that the students created a corporeal event, as they not only embodied the movement with conviction, but also utilised the breath and voice, which are so important to the work.

In closing the presentation, Ali explained the relevance of Laban's principles to the dance artists and the future development. As a result of the success of the re-creation of *Green Clowns*, Ali is researching the feasibility of reconstructing other Laban works; she will be teaching a Laban based dance technique class as part of the training of dancers at LABAN, Creekside at the request of the students. They wholeheartedly embraced Laban's principles and saw the potential for the future.

Finally in interview, Paola Di Bella explained the powerful impact of the work on her practice as a dance artist. She explained how the atmosphere of acceptance in the process had allowed her to flourish as a dance artist. She had become more of her own individuality within the group and that there was sense of community and communion in the group. She felt that she had gained new tools with which to experiment in her technique and creative work – thus highlighting the truly human dimension of Laban's work and the success of the re-creation by Ali Curtis Jones.

We look forward to seeing more of this work in the future and we wait with bated breath for the day then Laban's work can be fully realised and utilised in current dance practice. Ali and her students have certainly taken significant steps toward a higher profile for Laban's work.

Cathy Washbrook

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MEMBERSHIP OF THE LABAN GUILD

is open to anyone interested in the work of Rudolf Laban.

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'A Day of Firsts'

(Sadie Hunt - one of three new members on the Laban Guild Council - reflects on the 'Essential Acting' workshop led by Darren Royston and Brigid Panet. Sadie graduated from Roehampton University with a BA (Hons) in Dance Studies and gained her MA in Choreography from Middlesex University. She has a PGCE and is about to embark on the Dance Education MA module with Anna Carlisle and Maggie Killingbeck. Sadie works as a freelance dance teacher specialising in GCSE and A level Dance and choreographs dances for her own company: Shunt Dance Company.)Ed.



Sadie Hunt –
new member of
Council

Saturday 21st March was a day of firsts for me. It was my first *Laban Guild* AGM, my first Laban Guild Conference, my first visit to *RADA* and my first time as a participant in a workshop with the word 'acting' in its title.

I am sure that I am among many in the dance world who are terrified of the term 'acting'. Resulting from GCSE drama I have always associated acting firstly with verbal communication - having to articulate words and remember lines. However, more frightening to me is the idea of having to act convincingly as another human being with complexities and personality traits different to my own. The teenage me continually struggled to act sad or happy if I wasn't actually feeling those emotions at the time. I found it impossible to think back to something sad and then recall how that felt and I could never relate my response to my cat dying to whatever harrowing content we were trying to depict. Later in life as a secondary school teacher I spent countless evenings watching student plays and have witnessed bad acting: rushed lines, limited emotional content and insincerity coupled with forced gestures and unnecessary pacing.

This is why dance always appealed to me, more than drama - you could actually feel it. You can feel weight and tension, feel your energy and how you use it, it is real. Therefore, I do feel comfortable dancing a character, expressing emotion through dance even making some audible sounds (the guttural sounds we made in Alison Curtis Jones' workshops felt like a natural part of the movements we were doing). However, actually to act, to move and speak realistically as another person that the audience must believe in, empathise with even hate - is not for me thank you, I am a dancer.

Or so I thought, through participating in Darren and Brigid's workshop it is now apparent that my avoidance of participating in acting sessions has led to naivety and misunderstanding. In their fascinating workshop we had a crash course in how Laban's theories are used in training actors, to breathe life into text and how even Stanislavsky used these ideas.



Darren Royston explores the 'Circle of Adoration', the 'Table of Benediction' and the 'Wheel of Submission'.

photo: Pete Killingbeck

Darren started the workshop and we began with bowing, making eye contact with another person, stepping back and leaning the torso forward in the sagittal plane. We progressed this task by exploring where we stopped the bow; is it a small movement forward high or a deeper bow down to forward low? Automatically we took on characteristics as we responded to each other. As I took my deep bow, head level with my partner's waist and they merely nodded enabling them to look down their nose - I immediately felt inferior. I didn't once have to recall a time when I had been submissive or imagine what it must feel like to lack superiority.

Darren developed this idea further by incorporating arm gestures as we explored his *Circle of Adoration* (arms moving through the vertical plane), *Table of Benediction* (arms moving through the horizontal plane) and *The Wheel of Submission* (arms moving through the sagittal plane). Particular favourites of mine were pride (arms back high) and welcome (arms diagonal middle). As we moved around the space we responded to each other using these ideas. How devastating to open yourself up to someone in admiration (arms side high), only to be met with disappointment (arms place low). I could feel my body conveying meaning and emotion without me having to once pretend.

Our final task with Darren was to take on an unknown status. We were each given a playing card (Ace low, King high) and asked to hold these against our foreheads for everyone else to see, peeking was not permitted. As we moved around the space again we responded to each other according to their status. Gradually, as a result of how you were treated, you were able to take on your role within the group, a cowering nobody or a strutting picture card.

Brigid took the second part of the session and introduced us to the ways in which she uses Laban to train actors. The first aspect of Brigid's session that I found very poignant was when she explained how she has changed some of the Laban terminology to be more 'actor friendly'. It occurred to me that in the same way I had feared my perception of acting, that many actors avoid my idea of movement or dance.

We moved on to Squiggle Writing, which I, as a devotee of Labanotation found incredibly interesting.

Squiggle Writing Symbols:

. a full stop is a definite, grounding stop 'everything stopped'

, a comma feels more like a pause, a moment of hesitation

_____ a straight line is direct

~~~~~ a wiggly line is indirect

The lines can then be shaded to show the weight, or force/energy as Brigid refers to it. A heavily shaded line indicates a heavy strong energy; a less shaded line is read as light. An actor in Brigid's classes would then annotate their text with these symbols and use them as a sort of score to

accompany the way in which they delivered the lines.

We then had a go at an improvisation using this method. We each wrote a short squiggle writing score. Then in pairs we improvised a 'phone call allowing our score to lead the timing, energy and consequently the content of what we said. This was the dreaded moment: I would need to act as a person on the phone, sound convincing and be interesting. Through using the score I realised that what I was saying had variety and texture, the force at which I delivered the words had an impact on the way that I stood and how I moved. The moments of silence between my partner and I built tension and I felt terrible for upsetting her, and yet I have no idea what we were actually talking about.

This workshop was a fantastic example of how individuals use Laban's theories in their practice. In my opinion it is not a bastardisation of Laban's work but an example of the richness of the legacy that he left. The main lesson I took away with me from the whole day, reinforced by this particular workshop, was that Laban's work is inclusive, varied and as important today as it ever has been as part of new practice.

*Sadie Hunt*

## Rudolf Laban: an Inspiration for Current Theatre Practice

(Maggie Killingbeck MPhil, reports on Alison Curtis-Jones' *Green Clowns Workshop at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art on Saturday 21 March 2009*) Ed.

Alison's workshop demonstrated exemplary practice in terms of the use of Laban's analysis to inform quality and integrity of performance and choreography. The workshop followed up her *Green Clowns* Laban Lecture, whilst exemplifying the rigour, in depth knowledge, skills and understanding that Laban's work can bring to teaching and learning in dance.

The workshop started with Alison guiding participants to get in touch with their own physicality through sensing themselves in the space, sensing others in the space, becoming aware of the significance of their dynamic presence in the space - and in relationship to others. All introductory activities required this 'aware physicality' in preparation for a series of progressive tasks which enabled the participants to begin to recreate a fragment of Laban's *Green Clowns*.

In the context of the 'War' section of *Green Clowns*, pairs experimented with travelling towards, away from, and passed each other. This was layered with acceleration and deceleration. Still in pairs, shapes communicating the idea of combat were explored; participants were encouraged

to select harmonic opposites and perform them with suddenness and strength.



Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to explore transitions; however, Alison gave an inspiring demonstration of the potential of the planes as a means of linking the shapes. At the end of the workshop all participants had created war-like duets which were clearly articulated and strongly expressive. Interestingly, this relatively simple content exhausted many workshop participants - a reflection on Alison's demands for depth, integrity, coherence and quality. This was reinforced by the performance of the LABAN student, who accompanied Alison.

The student performed her choreography at the end of the session; it was stunning in terms of its bodily, spatial and dynamic richness. Indeed, the workshop as a whole, following on from the Laban lecture, was a wholly inspiring experience.

I am delighted to say that Alison has agreed to teach for the Guild again on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2009. Please contact M.Killingbeck@ntlworld.com for more details.

*Maggie Killingbeck*

## Essential Meanings

(Dr Ann Hutchinson Guest, Founder/Director of the Language of Dance Centre London and Honorary Member of the Guild, author and lifetime expert in Labanotation, expresses her views on the demonstrations provided by students on the AGM Day at RADA 21 March 2009). Ed.



It is fascinating to see how Laban's Space Harmony and Effort work are being used and adapted for other fields of movement study and research. My first training at age 17 was at the Laban-based Jooss-Leeder Dance School in the 1930s, thus this material was an essential part of my early understanding of movement. At the Laban Guild day on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2009, held at RADA, we saw examples of application of Laban's work demonstrated by a group of drama students. When they went through Laban's Dimensional Scale, I cringed to see evidence that they appeared to have no idea of what they were doing. What is the essence of forwardness? It is meaningless to have the body in a flat arabesque line, torso and arm forward horizontal, the free leg backward with equal energy, and **the face down, looking at the floor!** It is essential that the face be looking forward, that any backward gesture to aid balance be neutral in use of energy. I also observed students moving into the backward direction but accompanied by strong forward gestures that diminished any backwardness being expressed. This expression of direction is investigated in detail in our *Language of Dance® (LOD)* explorations, as illustrated here in examples 1a-c for variations on the direction forward. Often a neutral stance with a slight shift of the head and chest forward with heightened 'alertness', example 1d, can be more expressive of that direction than limbs fully extended forward horizontal. The sideward arm gesture of 2a might as well be the mechanical device of 2b. Ex. 2c provides a greater expression of sideward horizontal although the movement is spatially far less. So often it is the manner of performance that provides the appropriate expression. A whole separate exploration is devoted in *LOD* to the change in meaning when a different head facing is used with an otherwise identical movement, as illustrated in 3a-f and 4a-c.

At the Laban Guild session, the drama students performed the whole of the Laban A Scale in its basic form. But wait! What was that starting position? Each student had the left arm extended energetically right forward diagonal while the right arm was barely observable being curved around the body, the hand near the waist. For the Right A Scale, the right arm is important and should begin at

the point diagonally backward left; this requires that the body be twisted to the left and included in the right arm gesture. Observing the students' rendition of the A Scale, I wondered what value this whole exercise was to them. Did it have any meaning in relation to drama? Each of the inclinations could be performed, perhaps in miniature or located in a more comfortable area around the body, to provide an expressive, meaningful gesture. Should the pathways be performed peripherally with an extended arm, as I observed, or pass centrally closer to the body through flexion in the arm, as I had learned it in the Jooss-Leeder days.

When taking part in the *LMA (Laban Movement Analysis)* sessions in the States, I found that differences in application of Laban's work had evolved. For example, they start the A Scale at the point side high so that, with each two swings, there is a change in use of the "shräge" (the three-dimensional diagonal), thus using a curved volute between each two 'swings' instead of the sharp "spitze" (steeple) of the original setting. This change gives a different feeling and it is of value to explore the differences. I am not against exploration and adaptation but know that, if too far removed, the original identity, the original value is lost, it becomes something else.

### Ann Hutchinson Guest

Book:

#### ESSENTIAL MEANINGS



These examples are taken from the book *YOUR MOVE - The Language of Dance Approach to the Study of Movement and Dance* Second edition published by Routledge, New York.

## Laban as an Essential Skill for Actors

(The AGM day was privileged to hear and experience some of Brigid's 'invaluable practical resources'.

'Brigid Panet's book *Essential Acting* is an inspired and reliable toolbox for actors and teachers in the classroom, the rehearsal room and the workshop. She has distilled fifty years of acting, directing and actor training into a unique recipe which brilliantly combines the teachings of Stanislavski and Laban into an invaluable practical resource'. Brigid trained in ballet as a child and then in acting at the Central School of Speech and Drama (in the same group as Judi Dench and Vanessa Redgrave; she then acted professionally for 14 years in theatre and TV. She learned about Laban from Jean Newlove and Maxwell Shaw - when on the staff of Rose Bruford College. Brigid has taught and directed Shakespeare at the National Theatre in Canada, America, Brazil, Brussels and at major London Drama Schools.) Ed.

Stanislavsky, describing 'The Method of Physical Actions' - his final and most effective system of acting - said that without an understanding of rhythm no-one could put his ideas into practice.

He looked in vain for a theory of Movement which would meet the needs of the 'thinker in action' and I believe that he would have found his answer in Laban's analysis of action, as I have in my work with actors at RADA and in the profession.

In practical terms, the task with actors is to integrate a basic Laban vocabulary into their scene studies and exploration of character and motive; if it is taught as 'Movement' they will do good work in class, be thrilled by the direct experience of rhythmic change and expression - and then 'forget' all this valuable experience when it comes to playing a scene. So I am careful to use the word 'action' rather than 'movement'; 'rhythm' rather than 'Laban' and to teach through everyday action, rather than abstract movement.

An example of this practice is an improvised mobile 'phone conversation between two players. Because the human instinct of cooperation is so strong and the mirroring of rhythm and physical/vocal action between scene partners is a common problem - the actors, feeling under some stress as they rehearse a scene or play an improvisation, will unconsciously 'cling' to each other - while the action of the scene is of conflict, disagreement, certainly of opposing rhythms of the different characters, to give dramatic energy to the imagined situation.

Through the understanding of shared and opposing rhythms, taught through the basic 'building blocks' of Flow, Space, Time and Force (in that order) and using a simple series of symbols that I have developed for this teaching, actors can accurately observe and note down what they see and hear in others and what they plan to do themselves in terms of character, action and expression.

So, in this 'phone conversation exercise, as an example which brings the Laban vocabulary of action right into

the present world of the actor, the players have a direct experience of following their own 'rhythm sentence' which they have written themselves using the symbols of Space, Time and Force (or using only one or two or them, including Flow, as the learning commences); this inevitably brings them into opposing rhythms with their scene partner and they can experience the energy, fun and drama of the clash of character and intention; having understood that, they will want to incorporate - make physical through action, voice and emotional expression - this skill into the scripted scenes that they have previously found so difficult.

In his 'Method of Physical Actions' Stanislavsky finds that the simple doing of an action will immediately bring an inner emotional reaction - that the outer action and the inner response are, in fact, the same; the difference between this idea and his previous 'Methods' was simply the reversal of the stimulus; previously, he had said that the actor needs first to 'feel' and only then to express that feeling - and this leads to great stress within and forced expression without all the fun of acting and spontaneity of response to others is suppressed.

What the Laban structure gives us is a security, a 'larder' of specific actions with their combined inner truths of thought, reaction and emotion. When a theatre director or teacher understands Laban's analysis with his cast of actors, suggestions, instructions and assistance, can be given and used; without this, a common 'note' such as 'the scene should be faster' or 'put more energy into it' will result in rush and shouting.

For me, the book 'Effort' with Lawrence is the most useful of all Laban's writings: because it is centred in daily physical actions, work rhythms and the psychological aspects of bodily movement it is close to the task of the actor.

Looking at a dramatic text, too, in a well-written play one can find clear indications, through vocal rhythms and the balances of dialogue between several characters, of the Force, Time, Flow and Spatial relationships required - and this of course, includes the necessary actions of the scene. The action of the vocal mechanism in speech and sound can also be enjoyed through Laban's analysis; this helps the actor with regional accents, with the individuality of vocal delivery for each character, and for the clarity and beauty of speech-sound.

Finally, my enthusiasm and belief in the many uses of the simple 4 Elements of Laban - which is all that I find necessary for acting - has led to the writing of a book: *Essential Acting; a handbook for actors, teachers and directors* which has just been published by Routledge. My dream is that the connection with Laban and Stanislavsky, suggested and demonstrated in this book, will bring fresh enjoyment and capability to actors at all stages of training and experience, and to their teachers.

*Brigid Panet*

# Dance Mirrors: Embodying, Actualising and Operationalising a Dance Experience in Healthcare Part 1

(This article by Dr Jenny Elliott follows on from "Developing a Laban-based Dance Community within Healthcare Environments" (Movement & Dance, Spring 2009) and focuses on an integrated Arts in Health PhD research journey involving her as a dancer/researcher, service users and healthcare staff. The research was undertaken in the School of Nursing, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland. The article presents the opportunities, challenges and decision-making choices encountered by Dr Elliott whilst exploring how to best evaluate the participants' lived experience of a dance project through an investigative dance process). Ed.

## Background

Validated recognition of the role of the arts in health did not emerge in the U.K. until the late 1990s; however the Northern Irish-based organisation Arts Care, evolved earlier in 1992. In 1998 the Nuffield Trust organised "The Humanities in Medicine, Arts Health and Well-Being: Beyond the Millennium Conference" resulting in the publication of *The Windsor Declaration (Windsor 1998)*. This marked the establishment of formal recognition of the contribution of the arts in health within a U.K. context and eventually led to the establishment of the *Centre for Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine (C.A.H.H.M.)*, Durham University.

## Research Context

The study was located in the context of my engagement as dancer-in-residence with the organization *Arts Care within a Health and Social Care* setting. The residency necessitates facilitating dance programmes across a diverse range of healthcare service locations on-ward, off-ward and in a designated dance studio space.

## Locating philosophical considerations in dance literature

It was necessary for the purpose of grounding the study philosophically to attempt to trace the historical significance of the work of early pioneers of creative dance. The study literature draws on the revolution of dance that took place against a backdrop of revolutionary changes in the intellectual climate of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was the accomplished modern dancers of the time such as Isadora Duncan that first realised that their experiences had potential benefits within the health field (Meekums 2002). Rudolf Laban's early work in movement analysis, laid the foundation for innovators such as Bartenieff (1980) to further explore the evolving knowledge of how movement and dance impact on well-being within community and healthcare settings.

Rudolf Laban's life work offered the philosophical and practice foundation base for my research endeavour. Laban's *Analysis of Movement*, in providing a means through which to perceive and articulate a vocabulary for describing movement, opened opportunities within the study to generate quantitative and qualitative measurement and analytical frameworks developed through functional

and expressive elements of my dance practice.

Pioneering dancers in health during the 1940s and 50s in the United States developed methodologies and theories based on the concept of dance as a tool to regain a sense of wholeness by experiencing the fundamental unity of body, mind and spirit establishing current models of dance therapy practice. However, the methodologies and theories of dance therapy emerged to affiliate more with psychological and medical constructs of research. (Levy 1992) The theories and methodology employed for purpose of this study empathise with models of social science and performative science research (May 2001). Despite the fact that the study was not a dance therapy intervention, the early history of therapeutic dance provided a vital cornerstone of reference to support the current emergence of the role of creative dance programmes in health.

## Research Questions

The research study sought to answer two questions:

1. Does a programme of Laban-based creative dance contribute to the well-being of service users who have enduring brain injury?
2. What is the experience of service users with enduring brain injury and the staff who work with them who participate in a Laban-based dance programme?

## Methodology: generating research evaluation tools from the dancing body

Consideration was given at the outset of the study to the use of traditional measurement tools with regard to evaluating Arts in Health experience (White 2002). However, due to the dearth of appropriate tools of measurement relating to capturing participant dance experience, I set about designing a series of evaluative tools for the study that generated from my personal and professional dance practice (Simons & McCormack 2006). The approach to methodology was implemented in two phases;

- Phase 1 focused on exploration of my creativity and critique/reflection on my dance practice
- Phase 2 focused on generating a quantitative and qualitative methodology that emerged from the core of my creative exploration and personal dance practice

## Phase 1

The quest to generate evaluative tools and research knowledge from my *dancing body* initially involved undertaking a residency at an artist retreat in the South of Ireland. I worked daily in the retreat dance studio over many hours, familiarizing and critiquing my own personal experience of dance through Laban's *Principles of Movement*.

I surrounded myself with charcoal, paint, large sheets of paper and a diary strewn across the dance studio floor. As I danced I identified and recorded spontaneous and

reflective elements of how my body and mind responded to the functional and expressive perspectives of the dance. **Figures 1, 2 and 3 (samples of evolving charcoal figures that emerged from my dance experience at the artists' retreat)**



According to Fraleigh (1996) the experience of truth finding through movement propels dance towards meaning. The truth finding experience and my quest for meaning were both challenging and complex activities that necessitated delving into my biographic dance history and my present dance practice (Martin 1998).

My dance experience at the retreat resulted in a series of creative expressions such as reflective poems, drawings and specific choreographic articulations (See Figures 1, 2, 3). Key themes pertaining to functional and expressive elements of the dance experience began to emerge from in-depth analysis of my experience. These themes eventually translated into indicators of the dance experience and were adapted into quantitative and qualitative measurement and analytical tools for the study.

I brought my freshly generated dancing body knowledge following the retreat before my PhD supervisor. A series of dance supervisions followed where my supervisor and I danced together through the layers of emerging embodied knowledge making sense of and refining, my evolving creative-based measuring tools. Two specific measurement and analytical tools emerged:

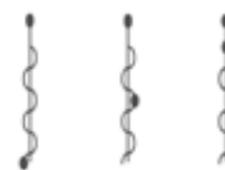
## 1. The Functional and Expressive Quality of Movement Measurement Framework

This framework is a nine-item measurement scale extending from 0% -100% on a five point scale.

It considers the following information for measurement:

- Body Control
- Social Interaction
- Sense of Well-being and Self-confidence
- Response to Physical tasks
- Emotional Response to Creative Task
- Commitment to Dance Programme
- Effort Studies

2. The Symbolic Coding System designed as an evaluative and analytical tool was used for both coding key themes and evaluating the dance experience (Sample, see Figures 4, 5 and 6). Both instruments at present are undergoing further testing for research validity, reliability and rigor.



## Emotional Response (Figure 4)

Dot at lower end of curving line=low emotional response  
Dot at mid point = medium emotional response  
Dot at upper end = High emotional response



## Spatial Awareness (Figure 5)

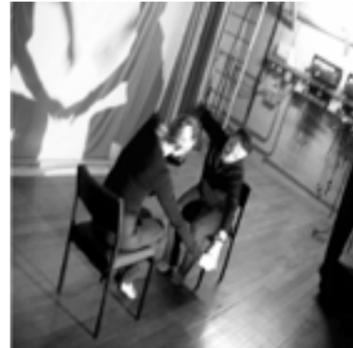
Transparent symbol indicates degrees of low spatial awareness  
Opaque symbol indicates degrees of high spatial awareness

### Effort Study (Figure 6)

Dot lower end of curve = little understanding and practical application of Effort Study  
 Dot in mid curve = medium understanding and application of Effort Study  
 Dot at upper end of curve = good understanding and application of Effort Study



My professor acknowledged the role of dance from the inception of the study as an integral part of our supervisory relationship. When words were insufficient or I experienced "writer's block", we danced through the difficulties together and into a creative knowledge that offered a clarity through which I was able to proceed. This supervision process confirmed for me the significance of drawing on the dancer's embodied knowledge as an informant of the research quest.



**Photograph 1: Sample of Mirroring Dance with my supervisor, Professor Brendan McCormack**

I continued throughout the PhD journey to encourage and develop a reflective practice for the research participants and myself that involved creative expressions that included dance, painting and poetic reflection. These expressions became an integral part of the thesis text.

### Sample Images of Healthcare Staff's Reflections of Dance Experience



Nurse 1



Nurse 2

Critiquing my personal and professional dance as a means to generate fresh approaches to research measurement and evaluation of the dance experience has led me to a greater understanding of the important role of the dancing body in generating academic considerations and articulations of the dance experience.

Phase 2 of my research journey in the next issue will relate the implementation of the creative-based methodology inspired in Phase 1 and subsequent analysis and findings.

### Jenny Elliott

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(Following the dramatic interview by Nigel Bance with William Elmhirst in our last issue, we now invite William's views on the advent of Dartington Hall as a world-renowned centre of rural reconstruction and centre for the arts, and on his knowledge and experience of these remarkable developments. But first a transitional question on the impact of William's half-brother Michael Straight on William's own connections with Dartington) Ed.

### Why did you consider it was of importance for our membership to be aware of the 'shadow' side of Dartington in the last issue of the Guild Magazine?

Because of my brother's membership of the Apostles at Cambridge in the late thirties and his continuing dedication to the Soviet cause throughout the Cold War, he secretly used both the family and others at Dartington to further the very cause that stood for everything my mother opposed. My first concern is to protect her reputation should anything more come out about the Dartington Ring which was in my view closely connected to the Cambridge Ring – and to other Rings yet to be exposed. Dartington may not have been the Utopia that Lorraine Nicholas so ably describes.

Having purchased the 1000 acre Dartington Hall Estate in 1925 and founded the Dartington Hall Trust, your parents – Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst – became recognized as the 'West Country's Greatest Visionaries' and 'The Region's Greatest Innovators'. How would you describe the motivating force behind your parents' vision and initiatives? a) Your mother's underlying philosophy? And b) The influence on your father of the Tagore family in India?

You must remember that England in 1925 was recovering from the devastating effects of the World War, the loss of her best sons in the fighting and the shattering results of this on the economy and the aristocratic social structures in the countryside especially. My father although not of this background was raised on an estate in Yorkshire owned by his father, himself the vicar of his parish. He loved to walk round the estate visiting the tenants and listening to his father discussing the problems they were facing, as their landlord and as their vicar. My mother, on the other hand, was an heiress at 18 when her father died. He was a politician and a lover of the arts, and one of the first conservationists. To her, throughout her life, the arts were essential to her sense of well-being. Her motivation was to share her wealth in such a way that others could benefit as she had done from a close involvement with the arts. She was also of a deeply spiritual inclination.

In India, under Tagore's inspiring influence, my father learned how to work with the villagers to try and stem the decline of their culture - economically, socially and artistically. In New York where my mother grew up she learned how to involve herself with the problems of society

in the broadest way, especially on the educational needs of the city. She took courses under John Dewey the great pioneer of the time in education. She also took on a leadership role in many other charitable activities. She was known too as a radical, supporting Trade Unions and Suffragettes.

My parents debated whether to start their experiment in the USA or in England and finally my mother decided on England. Tagore told my father to look for somewhere in Devon which he had visited as a young man. He then went on a search for possible properties and when he saw the Dartington Estate he knew that he need look no further. It was in a landscape of breathtaking beauty and had the one quality that he hoped to find but was most doubtful that he could, historical associations. These went back to the Plantagenets, for King Richard II had given the property to his half brother John Holand. I subsequently discovered that my mother could trace her ancestry back to John Holand through the Whitney line.

You spent your boyhood and youth at Dartington during the years of amazing development (ie the restoration of the medieval hall and courtyard, the combined introduction of new methods of farming and forestry, the creation of related industries with the promotion of arts and craft, the founding of a coeducational boarding school and a college of the arts – including dance). What are your most vivid memories of those years?

There were workmen every where, it was not a restful environment for an excessively shy little fellow. But there was a nursery community on the top floor of the Hall where we lived apart from most of the turmoil going on around us.

The Hall itself was an amazing household run on 'upstairs. downstairs' lines, with a continual influx of visitors from abroad or from London. Some people now think that this early period was the most creative time, for my parents were at the centre of things. Gradually they had to bring in managers and parts of the whole became semi-detached. There was friction too between one department and another but my parents were adept at juggling these and in keeping alive the spirit of adventure which was behind everything they were involved in. To be growing up in this atmosphere was challenging but invariably exciting and I look back on it with gratitude. Of course, the war put an end to this period which my mother referred to as the 'European Period' because of the number of European refugee artists who came to Dartington from the Continent and from Russia. The first period she referred to as the 'American Period' because both my parents drew upon advisers from across the Atlantic to get things moving, both in the Arts and industrially. The 'English Period' began in the war and continues to this day, but of course the cosmopolitan atmosphere remains strong especially

with the Summer School of Music run by Gavin Henderson and the Schumacher College run by Satis Kumar and 'Way with Words' by Kay Dunbar.

**Your parents were generous hosts and Dartington became the magnet for artists and musicians from around the world – including Kurt Jooss and his ballet company and Rudolf Laban. What influence did Laban's ideas have upon Dartington and what contact did you have with these artists? Did they influence you in any way?**

*I was of too young an age to have any contact with the artists you mention, but in-so-far as they contributed to the whole ethos of Dartington, I consider that I have been influenced if only unconsciously. I think that there was one visitor to the Estate in the 1930's who was aware of the possibilities of what my parents were aiming for and his name was Gerald Heard. He wrote "Dartington is striving to build up a complete purposive, fully conscious social organism, a thing which has never existed before." At the time he was a friend of the Huxleys and of H.G.Wells and was a regular broadcaster on the BBC. He spent a lot of time at Dartington and taught in the school until W.B.Curry was appointed headmaster and he decided to depart. D.H.Lawrence never visited Dartington as far as I am aware but he wrote profoundly about the 'spirit of place'. I believe that it is not difficult for sensitive people to tune into this mysterious level of reality. I would go further and say that the great artists who have spent time on the Estate will have left their 'carbon footprint' on the atmosphere. My deep regret is that a way was not found after the war to enable Laban to be given a base there and to be supported fully as the great pioneer that we know him to have been. But with the war the times were not right and I am grateful that I was able to meet him in the 1950's and help him move nearer to London and to have some of the support he deserved. It is only now that we are realising what a towering figure he was in the history of European and Western culture. I consider too that we have a lot more to learn from him about the range of his own searches and discoveries about the place of the Arts in society. And I feel optimistic that the future is bright with all that is happening worldwide to keep his legacy alive. There is a letter from my mother in the archive at Dartington saying that Laban was the most understanding of her vision for Dartington of all the artists who had passed through over the years. The coming of the Second World War put a stop to the possibility of his staying on in Dartington and after the war Peter Cox, as Arts Administrator, advised the Trustees against inviting him and Lisa Ullmann back. He felt that they should be closer to one of the metropolitan centres.*

**In 1952 you attended a Laban's men's class at Foxhole and then began a course at the Art of Movement Studio (which you purchased) at Addlestone in 1954). What inspired you to invest so much capital in the Studio and take courses yourself in the Art of Movement?**

*I wanted to be part of this group of people who ran the course at Foxhole. I must have felt that their enjoyment of life and of what they were teaching represented an opening into a new world for me. I wanted to take the*

*plunge and thank goodness I did. My decision to join them was the best one I made at a time when I was something of a lost soul.*

**In 1954 you trained as an actor at LAMDA and performed in Romeo and Juliet with the Dartington Players in the Barn Theatre and later you became a professional actor with the Leatherhead Rep and then in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre - when you toured with the Company in Russia in Michael Redgrave's Hamlet. How far did the ethos of Dartington influence your choice of career in the theatre and how satisfying did you find this experience – not least your association with Alan Ayckbourn when performing in the Stephen Joseph's Theatre in the Round?**

*I think it did influence me although my father was disappointed that I did not follow in the family tradition and go on to Cambridge where I had been given a place in his old college. But my mother was understanding and did all she could to encourage me. Without their encouragement I might not have found the path that has given me everything I could wish for in this lifetime. And of course my father was a great supporter of promoting the cause of dance in this country as was my uncle Pom who became chairman of the Laban Trust. He had seen what Sir Alec Clegg had achieved in the West Riding where he was Chief Education Officer and later became a Trustee of The Dartington Hall Trust. I am grateful to Lorraine Nicholas who has described so beautifully the history of the role of dance at Dartington and its place in the wider picture.*

**As part of your transition from full-time work in the theatre you spent a year teaching at the Dartington Hall College of Arts in the Drama Department. How do you look back on this experience and what are your feelings about the future of the College?**

*I used my year of teaching in the drama department of The Dartington College of Art to use my mother's notes of her classes with Michael Chekhov who was still resident in Dartington when Laban arrived in 1938. By then I had been influenced by Chekhov's To The Actor and so this year out, to learn more of his own method, was enormously helpful and finally made me realise that I would not find in the British theatre of the time what I was looking for. This realisation helped me to decide to move back to London to work with the Society of The Inner Light which practised rituals derived from The Order of the Golden Dawn, the esoteric order which W.B Yates had belonged to at the turn of the century. My feelings about the future of the College are that the Trust was right to plan its closure and move to Falmouth in 2010, as they had been instructed to double the number of students.*

**There is no doubt whatsoever that your generous support of the arts benefited so many causes – following the tradition of your philanthropic parents. Do you think that their initiatives, as well as your own, have fulfilled their visions and innovations for the future?**

*No, but we are on the way and close to a break through, I do believe. I am full of confidence about the future when the Arts and their true potential will be understood and with the help of pioneers like Laban, Chekhov, Bernard Leach, Mark Tobey, Benjamin Britten, Cecil Collins, Ravi and Uday Shankar and Willi Soukop who were all at Dartington at one time or another, along with many others, at the invitation of my mother, Dorothy Elmhirst. All of these understood and practised in one way or another the Perennial Philosophy. The Arts are not something we learn about: they must be practised, lived, for in this way we will find the Kingdom of God within and become whole people in the service of God, as Plato and Plotinus indicated.*

**Over the past two years as a Patron, you have become familiar with the activities of the Laban Guild and its Magazine (which is distributed to members, not only in the UK members, but to Eire, Belgium, France, Germany, Holland, Austria, Denmark, Norway, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Japan). Bearing in mind the Guild's Constitutional Objects (see 'Critical Debate' in the previous issue), where would you like to see the future of the Guild?**

## Practical Aesthetics from Movement to Art

*(Against a background of contemporary aesthetic theory, Dr Alan Salter invites readers to gain aesthetic experience through practical experimentation – a vital aspect of dance performance) Ed.*

### Origins

Persuasive writing has little place within academic conventions, but perhaps in relation to appreciation, to aesthetic sensibility, it may help give access to the key awareness without which - nothing.

Art criticism provides substantial objective evidence that there is more to appreciation than merely responding boo or hooray as one might in a tasting session of unfamiliar foods. Works of art stand in relation to a sympathetic community of others, may be grouped in terms of history, making and style, analysed systematically, or compared on a case by case basis. A work may be heartening or harrowing, just as our experiences of people, but with the saving grace of form which gives coherence and enables us to attend safely with steady unconditional regard.

Simple-mindedly, art is sometimes taken to be about resemblance - the accurate portrait, the familiar landscape - and so ultimately false. But skilful as this may be, it is of course not the point. Rather, resemblance sometimes comes along with art precisely because it is in the difference between actuality and work that the aesthetic lies. In the case of dance it may be complained that it indeed is only bodies: just flesh and bones, therefore no art, merely perhaps some kind of gymnastic or (the perennial condemnation of the sanctimonious) sexual display. But the bodies, usually conventionalised or made other, essentially carry the movement, the dynamics and spatiality of the dance.

*I thoroughly support the Guild's Objects and believe that Laban is the one who saw most clearly where we have to make for and I am so glad that the spiritual aspects of his searches are now being taken up at LABAN and elsewhere. Perhaps the objects of the Guild could be revised to include the wide-ranging spiritual interests Laban had as mentioned in your interview by Valerie Preston-Dunlop in the last number of the magazine and by others in previous issues. The late Frances Yates and now Christopher McIntosh have produced valuable insights into the history of the Rosicrucians so deeply studied and experienced by Laban before the first world war and after.*

*see:*

*The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* by Frances Yates, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul.

*The Rosicrucians* by Christopher McIntosh, published by Weiser Books, San Francisco.

It seems quite reasonable to propose that dance is the art of primary origin. Indeed since it requires no additional instrument beyond the biologically given, it is the simplest assumption. At the most elementary level of sexual selection, mates are chosen because they look fit, their appearance symmetrical rather than lopsided, their movement easy and effective rather than clumsy (even now you can notice that couples tend to match in how much they possess such virtues). The sensation range of comfort-discomfort is a valuable survival clue as when slight pain alerts us to a problem and our expression alerts others. It is unsurprising that moving well should feel good, for that reinforces our best adjustment. The same argument might be applied to the evolution of our appreciation of nature generally, our sense of beauty. If there are any sentient beings on Jupiter they surely rejoice in the balmy breezes which are observed by us as poisonous tempests.

Among the great gifts of being human is that of empathy. We don't merely recognise ourselves in a mirror (like other primates), we respond imitatively to the experience of others (you will probably have stumbled a little in sympathy with another's fall, felt a twinge in your joints at another's arthritis). Choreography, like all art making, provides a lucid vehicle for the communication of feeling. But as art has become sophisticated so it requires finer and better educated apprehension, and it can be opaque and incomprehensible to the inexperienced. Here follow five attempts to elicit aesthetic awareness. Try if any of them are helpful to you. If (and this will apply to most of you, dear readers) you need no such help, try to consider the tasks naively - for greater interest than that of tearing them apart with knowledge. Theoretical rigour is not the aim.

### **An Experiment through Action**

At some moment as you are moving about in a fairly ordinary way, stop suddenly. Attend closely to the body cues in this position. Perhaps your weight is more on one foot than the other, or there may be a slight twist in the trunk; recall the direction you were moving, notice if one part of the body has more (or less) muscular tension. Increase in succession every one of the divergences from the neutral; finally redirect your gaze and slightly incline toward another direction. Attend again to this enlargement within your own expressive range, and allow the mood or attitude which it embodies to seep into your awareness. Finally (still holding the position), when you can identify the state fully from within, switch to visualising yourself from outside rather like someone gazing at a sculpture.

This simple experiment can be developed in many ways. A difficult instance would be to hold the final position, identify carefully the mental reversal of the embodied feeling, and then allow the position to dissolve into a new state defined by that opposite feeling. Again examine it as from the outside.

From practical action to aesthetic awareness is a subtle change, needing not physical exertion but directed attention.

### **An Experiment in Another Time**

Imagine, if you please, humans provided with such basics as tools, fire, clothes, shelter and rudimentary communication (perhaps two or three thousand generations ago). Making flint tools requires repetitive action, each movement has a clear formulation and the whole task has a rhythm. The product, therefore, itself displays a geometric pattern of regularities, of larger and smaller strikes. Similarly, stitching comes to be done with well formed movement and then displays a consistent trace. Such designs are part and parcel of good function, and other patternings will later accompany the hand making of pottery and metal work. Also, perhaps, a deliberate additional marking - decoration - is then founded on such manual traces. Practise acquiring some similar skill, your successive processes like an acceleration of developments that may have required millennia.

Collective working actions require unison and a larger rhythmic organization, probably involving breathing and vocalisation. Try to imagine very clearly how the movements necessary to a particular task might be shared, even celebrated as cultural discoveries.

How might communication be achieved - what spontaneous gestures have you employed as a traveller without shared language? To 'name' a thing, it is imitated or the likely reaction to it is shown; and such naming is a most powerful device which might well be shown enlarged and clarified for greater efficacy. The notion of resemblance is established (and may influence speech as oral gesture) and the 'as if' eventually becomes detached from immediate report, freed for wider conceptual use.

Most importantly these humans, essentially ourselves, similarly displayed happiness and grief, fear and anger, in extended movement recognised by others. How

unsurprising if on special occasions such movements were deliberately portrayed to mark and remember important events. Recall a pivotal moment from your own history and if possible recapitulate that physical state.

### **An Experiment in Another Culture**

A strangely artificial thought experiment this, but it may provide some insight toward the ingredients of the aesthetic. Begin, please, with the odd notion of a civilisation which though roughly comparable to our own is entirely without art. Not easy, and we also seem to lose much of humour and of imagining save the literal, but try. So how might these missing elements be stumbled upon?

Our protagonist, call her Artless, is walking along the street when she sees a friend in the distance and appropriately raises a lower arm (the elbow bends but not much else happens). Failing to attract attention she extends the arm upward, which requires some movement decisions for there are more physical alternatives with the enlarged action: perhaps the palm is displayed open, moves. A strange fluttering catches her friend's eye - for a fleeting moment it is seen by accident as a bird - but it is only that odd girl Artless. A cheerful chat about a shared interest, history say, ends with a quotation by Artless who, bizarrely, departs with a salutation contemporary with the quote.

The friend naturally looks forward to the next encounter, and there is Artless with both arms raised high and side. "Just a stretch so you saw me" says Artless. "No, it was a Y" says her literal friend. "Y?" "Yes, like this." "Oh this" confirms Artless. And perhaps we should now leave them with any passing spectators, the first ever alphabet dance duo who hopefully will enjoy a long and influential career.

The point of this oddity is to see exactly what the gaps are which mark off the aesthetic and especially how difficult the artless initial state is even to imagine. In what other ways might the gap be bridged?

How much of dance from other cultures do you think you can understand generally, and how much requires specific information; and could they appreciate your dance?

### **An Experiment as Audience**

Next time you are watching a dance work set aside the distractions of special interest in the artists themselves or the technicalities: withhold as far as possible the critical faculty whether descriptive or evaluative. Rather allow the ebb and flow of dynamics and design to elicit complementary forms of feeling within your awareness: some elements and motifs will establish themselves as characterising the individuality of the dance. One dance may present a narrow but intense psychology, another contain diverse preoccupations or great changes of emotion and aspiration. This state you allow yourself to fall into may be a little like a trance or enthrallment; occasionally there may be an active imagining so that you seem to enter the world of the work.

Whether your primary mode of response to this is kinaesthetic or not, you may with repeated experience be able to detect tiny physical accompaniments, small shifts of sensation within your body awareness (rather as when

thinking deliberately there may be slight tongue movement). These virtual embodiments are in a relationship with the dance enactment: permit and examine this resonance of feeling.

Of course it is possible to adopt instead a very reserved and intellectual approach to art, and for those professional this facility is also essential. But the vital key to the aesthetic is a more direct apprehension. It is nearer to our unconsidered response to those we meet and to the perceptions of personal acquaintance.

### **An Experiment with Art as Life**

The dance performances we usually attend are in the context of theatre, a social institution. Works comprise dance with staging, music, often a more or less clear story or plot. In a simple duo each may establish a character in a solo passage before a more complex interaction; and at this level the music may also be defining of identity and situation. Even abstract dance can be experienced as a kind of temporal narrative of tensions and resolutions, of calms and climaxes. Music and dance may seem to be in accord: if contrary it is rather as if the dancer opposes the context, whether of psychology or circumstance. All these things you might care to note explicitly as a first step in exposing the aesthetic organisation and how the separate elements contribute and interact.

A silent dance can have peculiar power, that of isolation and unmitigated encounter. A dance with a principal figure leads us toward experiencing the whole through the protagonist, rather as a novel in the first person. But the choreography has its own existence over and above any number of performers, individual or massed - a symphony is not a compilation of instruments. The choreographed whole achieves its own identity, and a similar truth applies

to works in other media.

There is a sense in which works of art are like individuals we relate to in rather special circumstances. Perhaps you have a favourite ballet or book, comforting or inspiring like a true friend. Consider in what way the qualities it embodies (you might try a movement analysis) engage and strike a chord with your own life and hopes. Is there an articulation of aspects of your personality, enriched and given form, made public and shareable? Does knowing the favourite works of your acquaintances illuminate your view of them?

### **Values**

Beauty, truth and goodness may seem too portentous to take seriously in our contemporary world - which is so busy with its self-concerned strivings (and art too suffers from the deformations of profit and celebrity, ideology and fatuity). But these values are the fundamental aims of art, science and morality, and without these civilising pursuits we have little to guide us. We resort instead to ideas merely fashionable, to instinct suited to a more natural era, or to arbitrary authority whether from old books or powerful organisations. The arts give us a realm in which we can explore our human nature, a realm which at root is free from extraneous purpose. Most obviously, it is in the many varieties of dance that we extend and clarify ourselves - whether as choreographers, performers or spectators, for it is in movement that expression is founded.

*Alan Salter*

**Note:** Any comments to: [kl.humanfactors@virgin.net](mailto:kl.humanfactors@virgin.net) please. For technical background my PhD thesis on Dance and the QuasiPersonal in Art is relevant (CNA 1983).

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## The Laban Approach to Movement in Education

*(Hon. Member Walli Meier highlights Laban's heritage)*  
Ed.

Laban believed in the dignity and uniqueness of the individual and the right of every human being to reach his/her potential in life. He believed in the integration of body and mind, which is enhanced through physical activity. Purposeful bodily movement stimulates the mind - as does the mind stimulate meaningful movement, thus leading to a body-mind intelligence. He also saw the need to encourage and develop the innate spontaneous urge in children to express themselves through movement and dance - to explore their physical prowess and to enjoy their own natural rhythmicity.

As a result of a lifetime fascination with observing human movement of people from different cultures and all walks of life, he devised a grammar of movement which has made it possible to build, analyse and write movement sentences. His innovation of devising a form of movement notation made it possible to record movement as it is possible to record music.

The application of Laban analysis of movement is such a flexible tool that the teacher may use it in many ways to help children develop not only self-confidence but also social interaction, and foster sensitivity and strength. The enormous range of both spatial and dynamic alternatives makes it possible to devise a harmonious balance of movement experience in every session. It is also adaptable to the needs of every student. This form of movement experience may help children to achieve skills of athleticism or develop a rich movement vocabulary with which to create meaningful dance compositions and help to develop a critical eye for movement appreciation.

From Laban we have inherited a body of knowledge, a tool, which when made available is of inestimable value to all movement educators, whether in the field of physical education or in the expressive modes of dance and drama. We have a resource with which to build a rich and balanced all round movement education.

*Walli Meier*

# The Laban Scales and Rings

- a practical aspect of dance technique and training in the art of movement

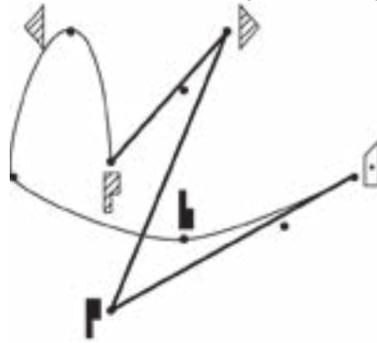
## Part 5

(Sally Archbutt MPhil, continues her well informed exploration of Laban's Choreutics) Ed.

### "7 Rings" – Mixed and Peripheral

I first experienced a "7 Ring" when I was a student at the Art of Movement Studio in Manchester in the 1940s. We were taught by Lisa Ullmann and an important part of our daily body training sessions included learning the correct bodily and spatial execution of different types of movement. Kinaesthetic experience always came first and theory later, in my case much later. Seventy years on and I am still discovering things and having new thoughts!

The shape of the "7 Ring" I first learned from Lisa consisted of a zig-zag, formed of three movements travelling forward and backward, one short and two longer, forming a V shape, and culminating in an 'arabesque'. This was followed by a large, curved, softer, more flexible movement, initiated by the trunk and finishing in the curved position of the start, called an 'attitude'. It was quite difficult to perform, especially the starting/finishing position standing on the left leg, with the body arched and twisted to the right, arm and leg bent and lifted backwards high, the left arm forwards.



On Laban's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday, as his birthday present to us, we were each given a card printed on both sides with six staves of dance notation. They were the kinetograms of twelve different "7 Rings". Six were called **Series A** and the other six **Series B**. Although interested in the notation I had not yet learned how to read the symbols.

These early experiences caused me to think about many things, especially the difference between the Laban way and the Classical Dance way of analysing and speaking about movements, and their understanding of the meaning of the terms 'arabesque' and 'attitude'. Is it most useful to think only of a finite number of positions of a particular type, or a vastly extended or possibly infinite number? For what purpose? For training? For choreographic purposes?

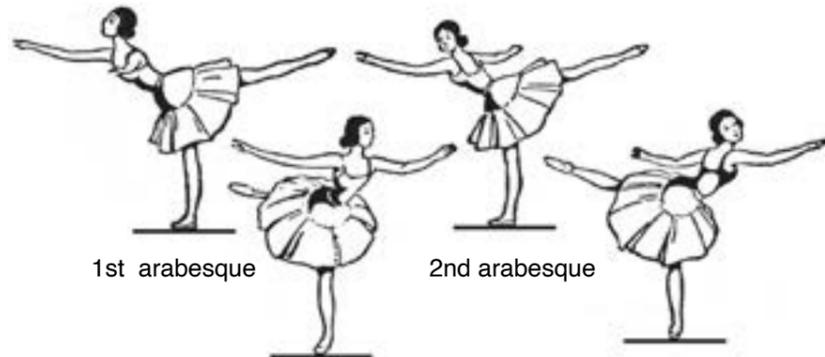


Attitude Croisée    Développé croisé front    Développé effacé front    Attitude effacée

Écarté back and écarté front

Showing two positions named 'attitudes' in Russian (Vaganova) style Classical Ballet.

A position in one plane diagonally facing the front.



1st arabesque

2nd arabesque

3rd arabesque

4th arabesque

Four positions named 'arabesques' in Russian Classical Ballet

Classical description of the position termed an 'attitude' is in terms of how the three gesturing limbs are deployed in the space surrounding the supporting leg, of whether the gesturing leg (bent) is open or crossed behind or in front of the support, and whether the body leans towards or away from the gesture. The direction of the face is also described.

In the position called 'ecarte' the limbs and body are described as all lying on one plane which faces diagonally towards the right front corner of the stage. In écarté back the leg gesture is directed towards the high, left back corner, the body tilted and face looking away from it. In 'écarté front' the leg gesture is directed towards the high, left front corner, the body is tilted towards the opposite back corner. The face looks high left, beyond the gesturing leg.

In the four Russian classical positions called an 'arabesque', the gesturing leg is always fully extended and lifted 90° the body and one arm reaching in the opposite direction to form a horizontal line. Looked at in profile a distinction is made between whether the legs are crossed or open. The shoulders are kept level and the back firmly held.

After many years performing, teaching and study I gave the "7 Rings" on Laban's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Card more detailed consideration. By then I was able to use a more sophisticated/detailed, descriptive/analytical terminology, and importantly, could read the notation.

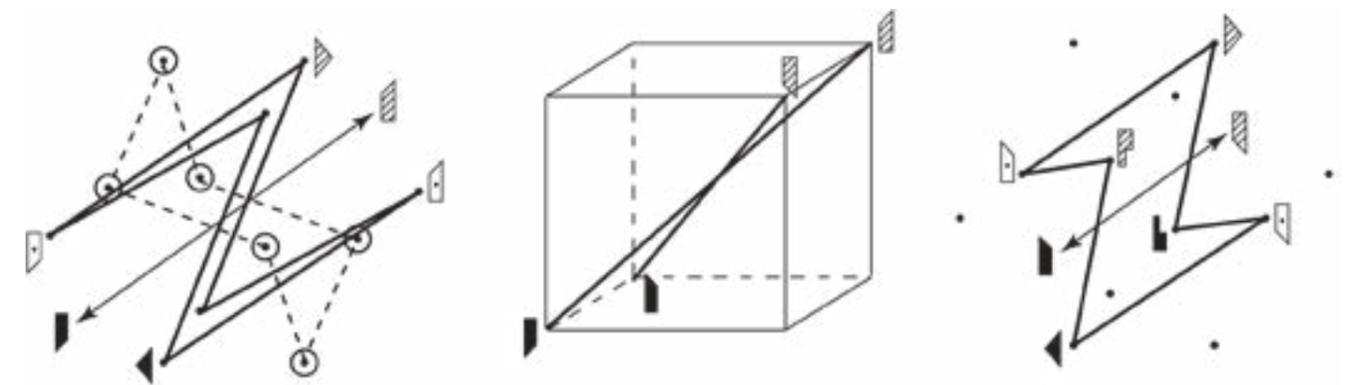
All the Kinetograms are of 'Mixed' "7 Rings" consisting of 2 Transversals and 5 Peripheral links. The two transversals form a 'steeple' which lies on a particular diagonal axis. The peripherals form part of the 'equator' circle which surrounds that axis.

The Series A examples (1 - 6) use in turn the six steeples of the RA Axis Scale, which all lie on the

'First Diagonal' ( - ).

The Series B examples (6 - 1) use in turn the six steeples of the RB Axis Scale, which all lie on the

'Fourth Diagonal' ( - ).



RA Axis and Axis Scale and Equator Ring

1st & 4th Diagonals

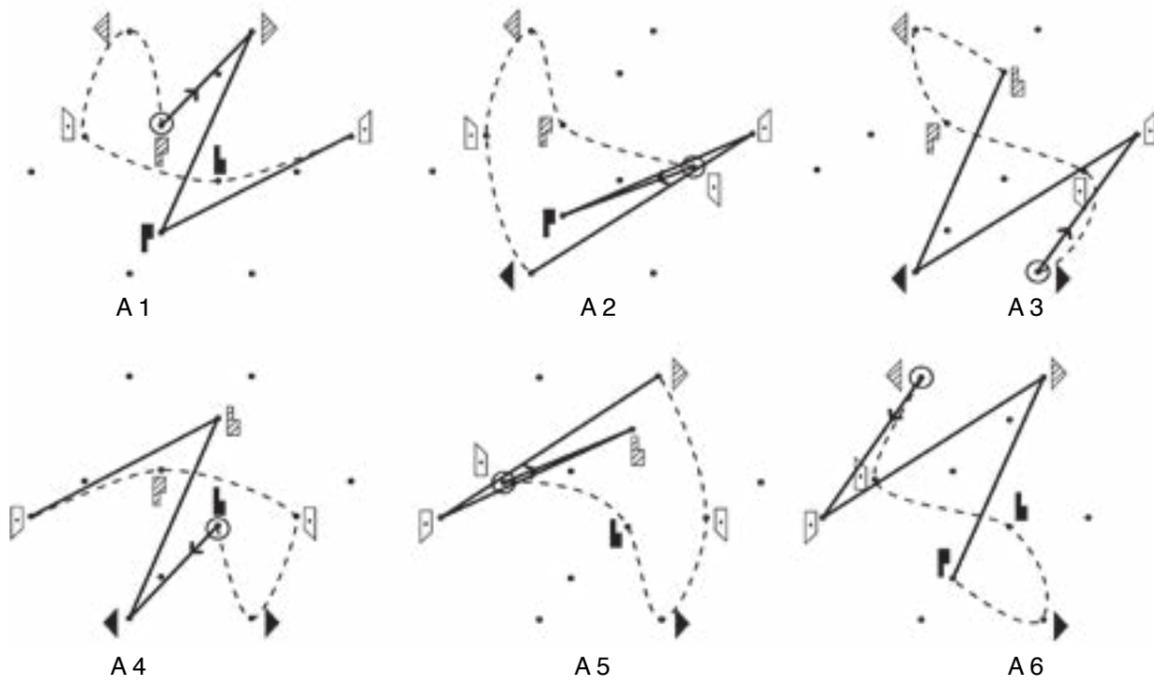
RB Axis and Axis Scale

There are twenty four of these 'mixed' "7 Rings" altogether. In spite of having the same shape, they look different and in performance feel very different from one another, because the ring shape is oriented differently in the kinesphere.

On Laban's Birthday Card the first and second halves of both the A Series and of the B Series balance each other, i.e.

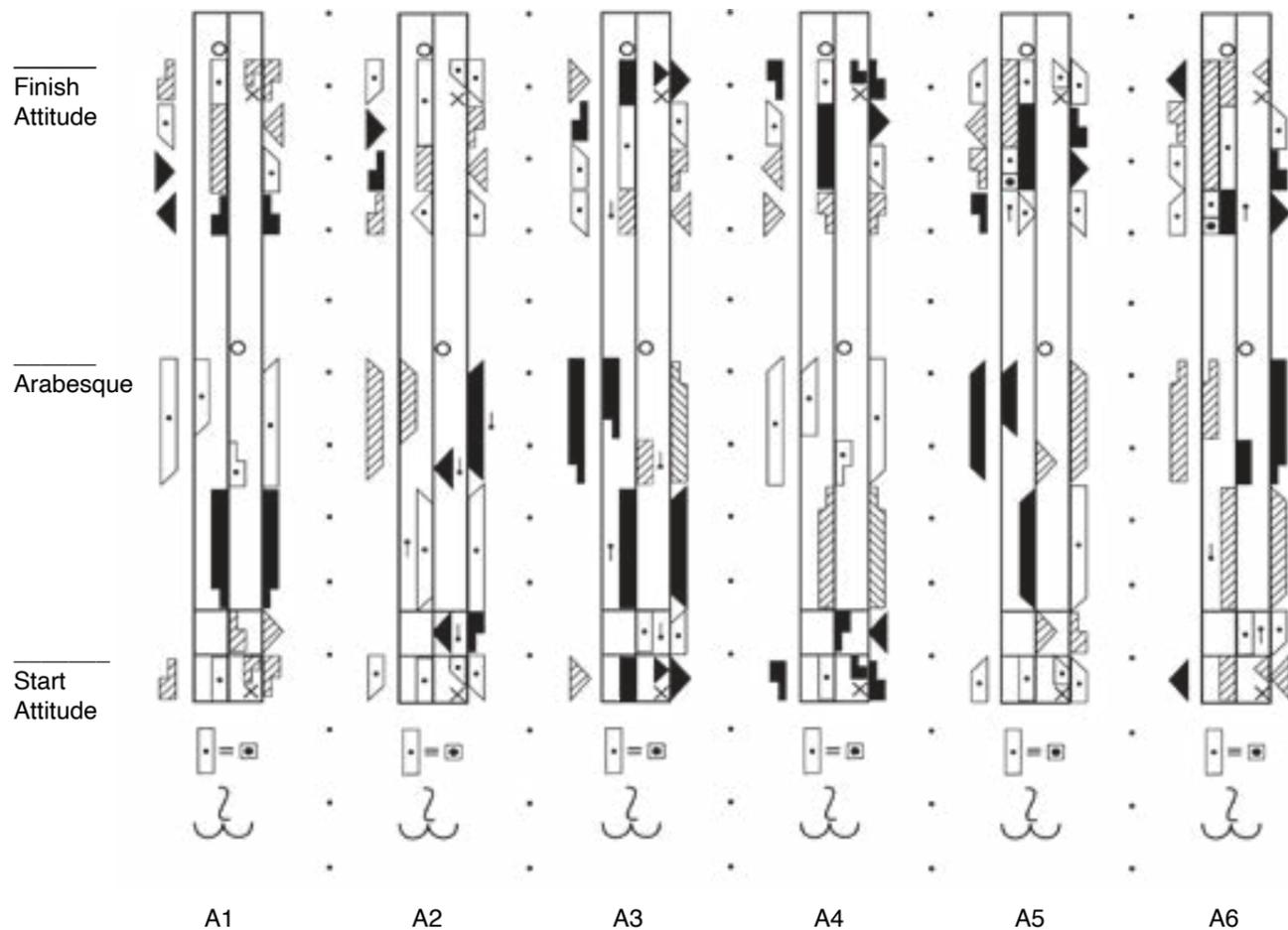
A1 is the opposite of A4,    A2 the opposite of A5,    A3 the opposite of A6  
B1    "    "    B4,    B2    "    "    B5,    B3    "    "    B6

**Movement Shapes of Series A Kinetograms on Laban's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Card of twelve mixed "7 Rings".**  
 (A1 & A4, A2 & A5, A3 & A6 balance each other.)



The starting positions ( ● ) lie in turn on the equator circle round the RA Axis

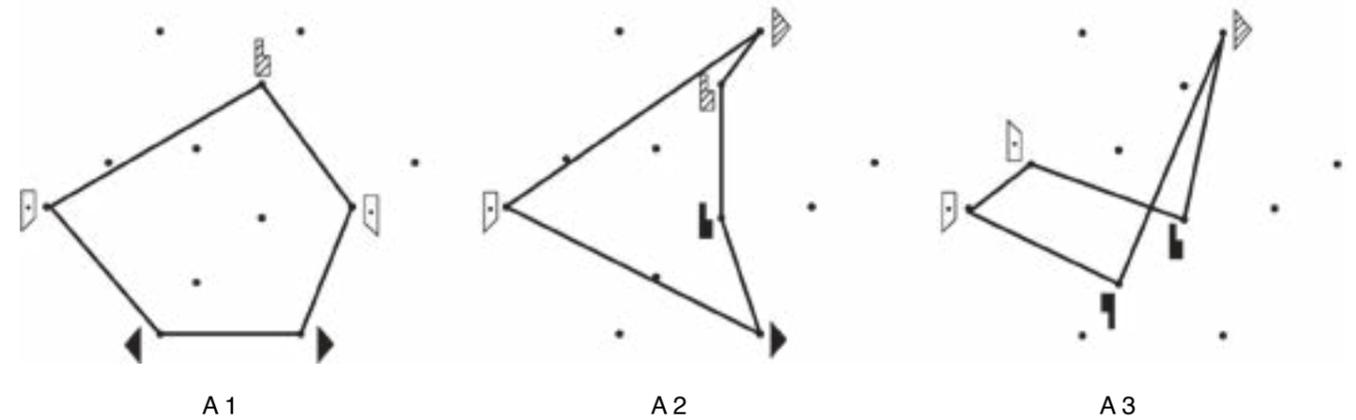
**Kinetograms of the Series A Mixed "7 Rings" on Laban's 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday Card.**  
 (Notation after Valerie Preston 1949)



The notation of six different 'attitudes' in Series A is shown in the starting position and again at the end of each kinetogram. The signs immediately before the gap in the middle of each stave show the six different 'arabesques' resulting from the axis part of the movement.

Although two opposite "7 Rings" (two labile forms) can be shown to balance one another, the labile asymmetric form of the Mixed "7 Ring" can also be balanced by the stable symmetrical "5 Ring" form of what is termed a "basket".

**The 'Baskets' balancing Laban's "7 Rings" A Series 1, 2 and 3**



By paying special attention to the shapes of movement pathways and positions one must not forget, as Laban says, that "every action has other inherent qualities apart from creating a new situation in space and time". The dynamism of a shape differs according to the purpose of the movement and the mover.

When studying the spatial scales and rings one needs to be sensitive to the moods paths carry, especially if one is a dance artist, painter, sculptor, musician or dance teacher and choreographer. Its mood is part of what unites a piece or fragment into a living whole with its own identity and character.

Every different movement trace form (type of or specific example of) can be treated as an inspiration, an idea. What do the Mixed "7 Ring" forms suggest in practice – in terms of dynamic/rhythmic possibilities, different possibilities, of bodily execution and different expressive and symbolic possibilities? There will be as many different thoughts about this as there are thinkers.

For me the "7 Ring" is a symbol that the combining of two opposing ways of thought is possible and gives hope for a less confrontational future in the dance world and society as a whole.

**Book List**

- Kipling-Brown, A. & Parker, M. *Dance Notation for Beginners*. Dance Books Ltd. London 1984
- Knust, A. *A Dictionary of Kinetography Laban/Labanotation*. Macdonald & Evans, London 1979
- Laban, R. *Choreutics*. (ed. Ullmann, L.) Macdonald & Evans, London 1966
- Laban, R. *The Mastery of Movement*. (4<sup>th</sup> edit. Revised & enlarged, Ullman, L.) Macdonald & Evans, Plymouth 1980
- Vaganova, A. *Basic Principles of Classical Ballet*. (2<sup>nd</sup> Edit). A. & C. Black London 1965

Laban's **Mixed "7 Ring"** is also spoken about on the DVD *Living Architecture* published by Anna Carlisle and Valerie Preston-Dunlop in 2008, the Laban Centenary Year.

A set of five **Peripheral "7 Rings"** revolving around a diametral axis and composed of three links of a "5 Ring" and four links of an 'equator', is also described in *Choreutics* (ps.185, 187)

*Sally Archbutt*

# DVD: 'Living Architecture - Rudolf Laban and the Geometry of Dance' Produced by Anna Carlisle and Valerie Preston Dunlop

## Editor's Synopsis:

The proliferation of DVDs in our time is rampant - our bulging letter-boxes play daily hosts to scores of seductive little discs! But we have to admit that with user-friendly computers and DVD players we can, at the mere press of a button, be transported into a world of pristine on-screen images, engaging animated diagrams, hi-fi music, close-up performances, face-to-face commentaries and amplified texts - not to mention the facilities of fast-forward, pause, zoom, freeze and reverse facilities for the dedicated analyst. The exploitation of this medium by movement and dance specialists, in order to present easily accessible material in an attractive multi-dimensional form (requiring skill, painstaking preparation and imagination), must be applauded. Needless to say, such media does not come without hazards as well as benefits - content and format-wise.

The DVD *Living Architecture - Rudolf Laban and the Geometry of Dance*, produced by Anna Carlisle and Valerie Preston-Dunlop, directed by Becky Edmunds, has many of the above qualities and will doubtless provide a stimulus for expressiveness in movement and dance, as well as contentious critical debate - for many moons to come.

There are three main aspects to this DVD. Firstly, the performances of a team of dancers whose alternating, interweaving and overlapping sequences - dovetailed into the captions and dialogue - are intended, we take it, to provide paradigm cases of 'sacred geometry' to be found 'embodied' in Laban's 'space harmony'. Secondly, there are the persistently pointed questions about Laban's 'spirituality' posed by the interviewer Anna Carlisle - which, in turn, direct our attention to Laban's scales as demonstrated. Thirdly, there are the erudite and illuminating expositions of Professor Keith Critchlow and Christopher McIntosh on the mysteries of the Platonic sacred solids and Rosicrucianism, respectively.

(Sally Archbutt kindly agreed to review the 'movement aspects of the DVD, whilst Dawn Turner and Amanda Banks have provided first-hand accounts of their experiences as performers. The editor has, therefore, concentrated on a synopsis, to which he has added some questions and comments).

Anna Carlisle begins the interview with an earnest and anxious question: 'Why this film Valerie? Why this film?' To which Valerie - with authority - replies: that whilst 'sacred geometry' is in evidence in paintings, architecture, music and other art forms, 'nobody has really brought out how sacred geometry is embodied in human movement; and that is what Rudolf Laban discovered' - and she adds, that: 'if we don't say it, it will be lost'. We must assume, therefore, that this film is calculated to rescue and revive material of considerable archival and contemporary importance.

Professor Keith Critchlow (with his international reputation in geometry, art and architecture) provides us with a definition of the key concept - 'sacred', stating with disarming simplicity: that 'everybody holds something sacred-it isn't a matter of whether you are a philosophically-minded person or a religiously-minded person whatever. Some people', he says, 'hold money sacred; some people hold their dog sacred and who is to say that any of them is wrong?' Professor Critchlow concludes that the term 'sacred,' is: 'that which is essential to human life'.

Against this wide-ranging essentialist definition, Valerie proposes something more measurable - albeit with universal implications. 'Sacred geometry', she says, 'is about mathematical ratios; it's about harmonics; it's about proportion ... like music, like cosmology, like all living matter'; and after this comprehensive characterisation, Anna brings us to heel by focussing our attention, with some feeling, on the central agenda:

*'What we are interested in here, is this aspect of Rudolf Laban's metaphysics which is being ignored - the sacred, or spiritual dimension'. To which Valerie replies (presumably interpreting Laban's dimensional scale as a 'sacred dimension'): 'The dimensional cross is a very basic scale ...'. There then follows a detailed description, with demonstrations, of the formal features of that scale.*

A fascinating explanation of the 'molecules of matter which make up the universe' - with exquisite models - is provided by Professor Critchlow. Molecules of 'fire', 'air', 'earth' and 'water' and their geometrical counterparts in the Platonic solids, respectively, are described: the tetrahedron, the octahedron, the cube and the icosahedron - the last of which, Critchlow remarks, 'Laban used very creatively'.

The planes embodied in the icosahedron are subject to analysis by Anna and Valerie, with animated diagrams and demonstrations, Professor Critchlow affirming that: 'Each of the planes in this figure, Laban used for dancing, for exercises or for a sense of awareness, you become aware



of these twelve points of the figure around you'.

Anna makes the key observation that: 'The planes had very particular proportions - the Golden Mean or Golden Section Ratio' - and adds, 'this is a very significant proportion for sacred geometry ... you find the Golden Mean in abundance in nature and also in the biology and anatomy of the human form'. Valerie confirms such to be the case by illustrating the Golden Ratio in the proportions of her hand, lower and upper arm.

We are then led through the mysteries of the 'equator scale', which: 'flows round the axis scale', and - drawing attention to the dance demonstration - Valerie adds significantly: 'this is done in the classic sacred geometry way with the whole of their being - their legs, their arms, their heads all in unison and then at this point the dancers go into choreographic (mode) ... but their embodiment is open to their own choice'.

Earlier in the DVD, we hear from Valerie, that Laban's work has 'two very clear parts: this space harmony stuff ... which is how space is embodied in movement ... and is based on geometry' and can be used for 'esoteric experience, or: - you can take it simply straight-forward into choreographic innovation', (Anna interpolates: 'which Forsythe has done'), 'yes', responds Valerie with animation, 'you break all the rules and have marvellous new ideas and you just experiment for the sake of making art'. Whereas, the 'space harmony', is done 'for the sake of the impression it makes on the mover'.

Anna pursues her 'spiritual' agenda by asking: 'When you trained with Laban, was this underlying spiritual belief evident in his teaching?' To which Valerie replies, cautiously: '... It wasn't overt, it wasn't overt ... you don't tell this to everyone. It's not stupid that Rosicrucianism, which is what he embraced, is a secret'!

A timely exposition on the nature of Rosicrucianism now comes from the world-renowned authority on that Brotherhood - Christopher McIntosh. He tells us that Rosicrucianism 'is a movement of esoteric ideas which



began in Germany around the 17th Century', which has 'two essential features': one is that 'we are on the threshold of a New Age - a Golden Age for Humanity' and the other is 'a holistic view of the world bringing together religion, science and the arts into one unified whole', and, he says: 'I think it was this in particular which appealed to Rudolf Laban'.

We are also privileged to hear about the 'New Age Colony' in Monte Verita in Ascona Switzerland, 'set up by a group of poets, artists, musicians and theosophists ... . They practised', McIntosh tells us: 'a mixture of alternative spirituality, nudism, free sexuality, dietary reforms and many kinds of artistic activity. Laban', he says, 'was a key member of the group'. (Here we are shown a tableau of nudes and others, including Laban - posing in ritual robes).

Anna, ever anxious to elicit the sacred significance of Laban's scales, enquires about the 'seven rings' - 'the very special ring for Laban', whereupon Valerie lifts the veil of Rosicrucian 'secrecy' and launches into a detailed exposition of the belief in the 'continuous cycle of birth to death and death to rebirth ... (the) union of soul and genes'. These beliefs are firmly linked to the practice of the 7 rings when, as Valerie says: '... in the 7 rings (the above cycle) is encapsulated in one incredibly intense little special form - when the axis and the equator scales collide'. This 'is a magical moment when the life to death cycle is finally broken ...'.

Professor Critchlow's wisdom is sought on the 'incredibly key number' 7, which consists of 3: 'the threefold movement of the spirit', and 4: 'the material world'. 'Everything square is about the material world and everything triangular is about the movement of the spirit'.

The interview concludes with Anna expressing the thought that what has been discussed is 'a quite unique way of being in the world and a unique way of looking at the world', and she asks the final question: 'Now we've got young dancers expressing these forms, what about older people, are they going to look at this material and say: well, what has this got to do with me? To which Valerie replies: 'We have been experimenting with how to make this stuff available to all sorts of people' but adds significantly: 'You can go that way (and) make it absolutely simple and experiential - terrific experience - or you can zoom into the other direction, superb dances ... incredible dances; it's just the choice which way you want to take it. It is there for you'.

## DVD Extras:

In addition to extracts in the main presentation from Professor Keith Critchlow and Christopher McIntosh, there are also impressive extended interviews with these two world-renowned experts - interviews which illuminate both the Platonic/Pythagorean and the Rosicrucian influences on Laban's 'sacred geometry'.

## Questions and Comments:

### Questions:

Anna's penetrating questions on the nature of Laban's 'spirituality' are calculated to enlighten viewers who might find the whole topic of 'sacred geometry' far too esoteric - or even irrelevant! The attempts, therefore, to explain and demonstrate the lesser known aspects of Laban's sacred 'dance geometry' are to be welcomed - even though they raise a host of critical questions - not least the following:

1) By what criterion do we consider Laban's 'dance geometry' to be 'sacred'? Is it the presence of that Divine proportion the 'Golden Mean', to be found in our bodies, nature, the universe at large, and epitomised overtly in Plato's sacred solids, or is it Laban's esoteric spiritual belief in the sacredness of space harmony, based upon Rosicrucian principles - principles 'which he embraced', but kept 'secret' - as a committed Rosicrucian would be required to do?

2) When we use the terms 'sacred music', 'sacred drama', 'sacred art' - are we not thinking of *religious* examples, such as, respectively (say): *Handel's Messiah*, *Oberammergau Passion Plays*, or Michelangelo's *Creation of Adam* (the last of these as illustrated by Valerie) - rather than (say) Professor Critchlow's definition of 'sacred' as: what is 'essential to human life' - although even Plato would place this in the realm of the divine (see his quotation below)?

3) Is the 'classic sacred geometry way' of performing Laban's scales, (referred to by Valerie) customary for contemporary practitioners - or is it a practice vouchsafed only to those who adopt a 'sacred' set of beliefs in relation to Laban's space harmony? If so, what is the precise nature of those beliefs? Are they religious, or secular? (We know that Handel could be as sacred in his Oratorios as he was profane in his Operas!).

In other words, are Laban's 'sacred dance' performers in the DVD just *representing* religious sacred subject material, as would performers in (say) Cohan's *Stabat Mater*, (which expresses Mary's sorrow for the dead Christ - inspired by the nostalgic music of Vivaldi), or are the performers *personally involved in a committed sacred act* themselves - as are many singers in choral societies throughout the land when they perform (say) *Bach's B Minor Mass*)?

4) Are not the metaphors 'Living Architecture' and 'Geometry of Dance' only two of many possible metaphors which might be applied to describe the many aspects of dance? Why not 'Living Sculpture', 'Visible Music', 'Shifting Pictures', 'Virtual Gestures', 'Virtual Powers'? (all proposed by eminent dance theorists). Could it be that the notion of the universe as a work of 'architecture', with God as its master-architect (see William Blake's painting), had more than a little significance for Laban's choreutics? - see *Choreutics* p.115).



God as Architect by William Blake

divergence between the two'.<sup>1</sup> Even Laban himself states:

5) Might we not even question whether the *abstract* nature of Euclidean geometry is the most appropriate and sympathetic form with which to express the intimate spatial nuances of our bodily expression in dance (sacred or otherwise)? For as one eminent anthropological philosopher reminds us: '... the space of perception, the space of vision and touch, does not coincide with the space of pure mathematics ... there is indeed a thorough-going

'... our feeling does not comprehend living movement within geometric plasticity ...'. (*Choreutics* p. 88) - and yet our experts consistently prioritise and extol the 'geometry' of dance, as opposed to its other real and non-geometrical virtual aspects (see Susanne Langer on 'Virtual Powers' in *Feeling & Form* Chap.. 11)!

**Comments:**

On the inside front sleeve cover of the DVD, the producers make the announcement that 'Living Architecture presents, 'for the first time', Laban's space harmony dance material, its geometric basis and the spiritual philosophy that is embedded in it'. We know, however, that 'Laban's space harmony material', and its 'geometrical basis', have long been the staple diet of his followers, but less familiar is Laban's 'spiritual philosophy' (although in this Magazine and reported conferences, as well as other publications, we find his 'sacred' beliefs have been presented in some detail.<sup>2</sup>)

What has not been witnessed before, we are led to believe, are *performances* of Laban's space harmony sequences and circuits in which his 'spiritual philosophy' is overtly 'embodied'. But, here again, we find that Mira Sievert's 2006 *Laban Lecture* provided us with some vivid live demonstrations of 'Sacred Dance Practice related to Laban's Movement Harmony and Indian Kathak Dance' - (see *Movement & Dance* Vol. 25 No. 2 Summer 2008); and also Lani O'Hanlon has demonstrated 'The Sacredness of Movement & Dance' - (see *Movement & Dance* Vol. 26 No. 4 Summer 2008 and Vol. 27 No. 1 Spring 2008).

'The whole area of geometry - sacred geometry', Valerie claims, '... has never been shown to be integrated into human movement. We know how it is' 'in painting ... in architecture ... in music ... in other art forms' she says, 'but nobody has really brought out how sacred geometry is embodied in human movement - and that is what Rudolf Laban discovered and put forward ...'.

Now, notwithstanding this claim, the dance historian would readily show us that throughout history, sacred dance rituals have been enacted in geometrical forms - not least sacred circles - whereby divine powers are invoked, placated and worshipped<sup>3</sup>. Laban's own commitment to the embodiment of 'circularity' in human movement, and its cosmic implications, chimes with the historical evidence, and is never so well expressed by Laban himself, as an educational principle,

**... through circular exercises and harmonious sequence 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 ...'** (Rudolf Laban *Des Kindes und Gymnastik und Tanz* 1926:126)

and again as an imperative:

**... it cannot be said too often, and is a unique conception to be stressed repeatedly and to be remembered: movement the path in our surroundings, the path as a sign, a symbol of the complex pathways of the universe, - it is to this that today we are directed ...'** (ibid:48)

These views of Laban are clearly in the mainstream of classical thought, for the Pythagoreans themselves went so far as to call upon their followers to purify their lives by:

**'copying, imitating ... the mathematical perfect regularity of the (divine) 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'**<sup>4</sup>.

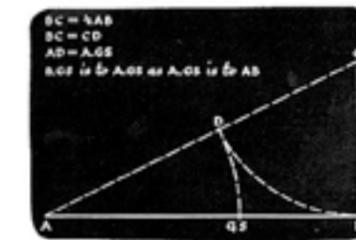


Drawing by Rudolf Laban (*Choreographie* 1926)

Even today sacred rituals are to be found in the circular movements of the whirling Dervishes as they emulate the divine solar system and become 'united with the cosmos' - not to mention the sacred geometry embedded in the cosmic dances of Shiva Nataraja and, of course, in Yoga - the Hindu system of philosophy which aims at the mystical union of the self with the Supreme Being through movement exercises! The integration of sacred geometry in human movement is, then, never so alive as it is in dance history (albeit as the expression of a mythical consciousness) - even in our present age! But we are led to believe from the DVD, that Laban's legacy of sacred geometry, with its time-honoured embodiment and elaboration of Platonic Divine Geometric solids into choreutic 'rings' and scales, is a special case, and must be preserved - whether in the form of esoteric experience or artistic representation?

**'The Golden Mean':**

Valerie is absolutely right when she refers to painting, architecture and the other arts as 'embodying' sacred geometry - where she doubtless has in mind their exemplification of that Divine Proportion the 'Golden Mean'. We know only too well that the paintings of Francesca Vermeer, Michelangelo, Raphael and many



others, all religiously employed the Golden Mean - as did the great architectural monuments of the Pyramids, the Parthenon, Greek Sculpture, Medieval Gothic Churches and Cathedrals. One authority goes so far as to state that: 'Gothic Art would not have come into existence without the Platonic Cosmology ... the ideal church must be constructed according to the laws of the universe (and) the application of the perfect proportions determined by rigid geometric laws ... the Golden Section ...'<sup>5</sup>

**The Golden Section**

But, of course, if the Divine Golden Section was intended to *guarantee* the *sacredness* of such works, it surely does

not follow that it also guarantees their *artistic merit* - for if that were the case, then anyone with a good ruler and pair of compasses, and the ability to apply the Golden Section, could create great works of art?

Sir Herbert Read declares, significantly:

**'Since the early days of Greek philosophy men have tried to find in art a geometrical law, for if art (which they identify with beauty) is harmony, and harmony is the due observance of proportions, it seems reasonable to assume that these proportions are fixed. The geometrical proportion known as the Golden Section has for centuries been regarded as such a key to the mysteries of art, and so universal is its application, not only in art but also in nature, that it has at times been treated with religious veneration'**<sup>6</sup>

But Read adds dismissively:

**'Greek vases do conform to exact geometrical laws, and that is why their perfection is so cold and lifeless. There is often more vitality and more joy in an unsophisticated peasant pot.'**

Undoubtedly, Laban believed that the key to the mysteries of the 'art of movement' lay in the existence of a geometrical law to be found in the fixed proportions of the Golden Section - of which Plato's solids were paradigm cases - and that the harmony of movement could be achieved by the due observance of these proportions. There is evidence also, that Laban regarded these proportions with 'religious veneration'. The question arises, however, as to whether such proportions are *necessary and sufficient conditions* for the art of movement? Sir Herbert Read's illustration suggests otherwise!

**Two very clear parts ...':**

Valerie makes a 'very clear' distinction between: 'this space harmony stuff ... based on geometry', which is used for 'esoteric experience - for the sake of the impression it makes on the mover', *as distinct from* its use for 'choreographic innovation' (where 'you break all the rules and have marvellous new ideas and you just experiment for the sake of making art' - as did William Forsythe).

Now many viewers will seriously question this reductive bi-partite distinction, and maintain that there are numerous other applications of Laban's space harmony which are ignored - not least its use for *dance training* - for as Sally Archbutt cogently reminds us:

The technical purpose of practising the 'Scales' is to develop movement accuracy, clarity of direction and shape, range of expression, kinaesthetic sensitivity, and fluent, rhythmic, harmonious use of the body. (*Movement & Dance* Vol.27 No 2 Summer 2008)

Professor Critchow also indicates in the DVD that: What Laban did so brilliantly was that he took this figure (the icosahedron) and used it for dancing or **a sense of awareness - you become aware of these twelve points of the figure around you ...'**

Laban's fertile ideas on space harmony are not, then, to be reduced merely to two modalities, (the 'esoteric' and

the 'choreographic'), but can be found in a multiplicity of profitable applications, including: technique, movement analysis, therapy, health, drama, education, sociology, psychology - as well as metaphysics!

### **Rosicrucianism and Plato's Timaeus:**

We are privileged to see and listen to Christopher McIntosh in the DVD on the topic of Rosicrucianism, and we have already recorded his views in our synopsis above; they provide us with two very positive features:

1) 'the idea that we are on the threshold of a new age – a New Golden Age for Humanity', and:

2) 'a holistic view of the world bringing together religion, science and the arts into one unified whole'.

The latter, Christopher McIntosh suggests, 'must have appealed to Rudolf Laban'.

Certainly Laban's interest and expertise in drawing, painting, architecture, sculpture, theatre, drama, and dance, as well as science and spiritual matters, would confirm this, for he clearly looked forward to a 'New Golden Age' in man's movement and dance. But we should also remember that Laban was also an *antiquarian* and drew immense inspiration from ancient ritual and in particular from Plato's *Timaeus* and the Divine geometrical solids; even among the Rosicrucian slogans, McIntosh reminds us, was: 'back to antiquity, back to Nature, back to the Great Mother!' Modern esoteric Rosicrucianism undoubtedly echoes a great deal of classical philosophy (including the geometrical proportions of the human body – the Golden Section – which are allegedly reflected in the universe). But there appears to be little overall coherence in Rosicrucian metaphysics. Indeed, Christopher McIntosh reminds us that their 'spiritual practices' varied from one group to another', and that 'it is a very profuse hotchpotch of ideas which has ... succeeded in creating a certain mystique and attracting a large number of followers' and at a time when there was 'a vast cat's cradle of different movements – overlapping, borrowing from each other, splitting off and new groups forming all the time'.

One of the firm beliefs of the Rosicrucians, McIntosh tells us, is the universality of that geometrical proportion the Golden Section ('as above so below').

He says:

**'so if you were to express one of these sacred proportions through movement, you would be putting yourself into touch with a principle which is present in the universe and yourself'.**

What could be more consonant with Plato's declaration in the *Timaeus* than that:

**'... the motions that are akin to the Divine in us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe. We should therefore attend to these motions ... by learning about the harmonious circuits of the universe ... When that is done we shall have achieved the goal set us by the Gods, the life that is best for this present time and for all time to come.'**<sup>7</sup>

These Rosicrucian and Platonic declarations, then, must surely reflect a powerful motivation for Laban's sacred geometry of dance - for what, again, could be more consonant with his beliefs than the quotation by Laban

himself on the heading on the DVD back cover:

**'Our body is the mirror through which we become aware of the ever-circling motions of the universe with their polygonal rhythms'** (*Choreutics* p. 26)

Professor Critchlow, in his fascinating DVD presentation, concludes that the term 'sacred,' is 'that which is essential to human life'. We might well ask, whether we consider exercises in Laban's space harmony are 'essential to human life', or whether we would prefer to interpret them as the pleasures and skills to be found in 'harmonious movement', 'technical efficiency', 'movement analysis', 'choreographic stimulus' - or a even a metaphysical commitment to Plato's 'goal set us by the Gods'? (For in Laban's house there are many mansions!).

'What Laban did so brilliantly', Critchlow concludes, 'was that he took the icosahedron 'with all the profundity of knowledge of ... the *Timaeus* ...' and made use of it for movement and dance. And, we might add: in its prolific modalities!

We are indebted to the producers of *Living Architecture – Rudolf Laban and the Geometry of Dance* for having dared to venture into such an esoteric and metaphysical minefield – if only to stimulate lively discussion, and more importantly, to throw light on the lesser appreciated aspects of Rudolf Laban's deep underlying spirituality – notwithstanding the serious and understandable reservations held by the sceptics!

### *Gordon Curl*

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(The DVD *Living Architecture – Rudolf Laban and the Geometry of Dance* is available from: [www.dancebooks.co.uk](http://www.dancebooks.co.uk) Tel: 01420 86142

Photos in the previous and the following reviews are by Becky Edmunds and appear by kind permission of the DVD Producers: Anna Carlisle and Valerie Preston-Dunlop.

## Sally Archbutt MPhil reviews the DVD - with particular reference to its movement examples

I watched the DVD *Living Architecture* with interest, especially because I am at present writing a series of articles about the Laban Scales and Rings. I have been asked to comment on the movement examples presented in the DVD.

The DVD is aimed at explaining one of the important ideas of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century dancer/artist/researcher Rudolf Laban (1879 – 1958), namely: his use of geometrical concepts in the spatial analysis of dance and demonstration of how they are embodied physically in all movement, whether occurring naturally, or choreographed for special artistic or other purposes. This aspect of movement study came to be known to his students as the study of 'Space Harmony', an aspect of the grammar of movement as an artistic language.

The concentration in the dialogue of the DVD on a religious aspect to this and calling it 'sacred geometry' shocked and surprised me. It did not remind me of the Laban approach to dance and movement study that I experienced, came to understand, believe in, practised and made my own throughout my long life as dancer and teacher, or Laban as a person. In none of his books in English or translated into English is there any mention of religion, or Rosicrucianism. To me one's religion is a private affair. Laban was not a Preacher, but a TEACHER. He was a creative dance artist and thinker, an acute observer of people and their movement, who interested, inspired and caused people to learn how to develop their movement skill, knowledge, and ability to apply it creatively for many different purposes. He was generous in sharing his knowledge and thoughts and had the humility of a scholar faced with the immensity of the knowledge of things to be discovered in his chosen field. He enjoyed working with different kinds of people, young and old, amateur and professional, was a befriender and healer, but also had a special vision of the importance of dance and movement and how dance as a performing art could be developed.

I found the dialogue between Anna Carlisle and Valerie Preston-Dunlop, the presenters of the DVD, lacked humility and made too much show of their knowledge and importance. Annoyingly, I found it interfered with my freedom to observe and comment on the movement examples shown in the DVD from my own point of view as a former Laban-trained professional dance artist and teacher. The remarks of Professor Critchlow and Christopher McIntosh, on the other hand, I found interesting, illuminating and helpful in extending my own knowledge and viewpoint.

The movement shown on the DVD did not remind me of the Laban approach to movement study and dance training that I grew to understand and appreciate. The dancers moved with care, but seemed restricted and with little spark. The examples also made the art of dance

choreography seem simplistic, just a question of facing different ways and moving in opposite directions. This is a massive understatement of the importance of Laban's conception of the basic role of oppositions of many different kinds.

I could not link the movement shown with any kind of dance, or with any form of art. It seemed to be just movements used to explain some mathematical ideas in a solemn manner without expression, instead of the other way round – i.e. geometric analysis being used to explain some exciting dance movement forms.

Many of the examples are performed in a slow, even manner, with concentration on pausing in different positions, rather than on the shapes of the trace forms of the movements. There is little rhythmic variation.

In my view the presenters of the DVD mistakenly attempted to detach the spatial elements of movement from its bodily, dynamic and flow aspects, thus debilitating it and depriving the dancers of their possibilities both to communicate differences between each unit and to dance each example as an expressive whole with life and meaningful form.

The love of dance stems initially from the sensation and intrigue of seeing and learning how to do special movements, different from everyday life, difficult to master at first, but which gradually become easier if practised. The feeling of mastery over such movement forms **can be a joyous thing**, connecting and liberating, and lead to notions of beauty, creation, art, health, harmony, etc. In addition to Laban's great contribution to dance theory, he sought to bring back **life** into the European dance-art forms of his time.

I have one comment to make about the movement accuracy of the choreography shown – namely the A Scale. This was not a truthful version of Laban's A Scale but a deviated version using a peripheral pathway between each kinaesthetic location, instead of the transversal one, and masking one of the fundamental sequential laws of Laban's notion of space harmony. Interestingly, this example was the only one in which the dancers were allowed to enjoy themselves by increasing the size, speed and liveliness of the movement, and to reveal their thoughts as artists and their true potential.

To do full justice to the work of Rudolf Laban I feel that an opportunity to link up with the influential dance establishment has been missed. I personally have always regarded his ideas as as an extension to traditional dance and movement practice and thinking, and that the purity of its basic ideas should be respected – as should the accumulated knowledge of history.

*Sally Archbutt*

## 'A Special Opportunity'

(Dawn Turner reflects on her experiences as a performer in the DVD 'Living Architecture – Rudolf Laban and the Geometry of Dance'. Dawn graduated from University College Chichester. She is a dancer, performer, choreographer and Shiatsu practitioner.) Ed.

I first encountered Rudolf Laban some 20 years ago with Anna Carlisle at a *Further Education College* in Lewes, and was fortunate to attend the Laban (LinC) Summer Course. I felt at the time his work was important because it ignited in me, for example, a freedom in dance – in particular, his understanding of the dancer's use of 'space'; but I did not have the maturity to comprehend what I was dancing. I had absorbed a small proportion of Laban's work - having physically undertaken some of the work over time - but now, having revisited the 'scales', 'planes' and 'dynamics', mentally and spiritually, I begin to understand and enjoy them. Taking part in the *Phoenix Project* and the DVD production was a unique and a special opportunity.

The Choreutics studied for the DVD were challenging and fascinating to learn, an experience that stays with you to build on in the future.

I personally found each study or scale learnt has a different quality, emotion and natural dynamic. The DVD filming involved repeating the chosen studies again and again to film from different angles. The more times I repeated the studies the more I became aware of the different emotive qualities each of the studies produced. The rotational A scale for example has a wonderful sense of space, rotating around your axis, trying to reach and attain something just beyond your fingertips and the feeling of suspension in the movement. The plane studies, the sagittal, the

horizontal and the vertical, demand you as a dancer to be as accurate as possible to really convey the idea of each plane to the viewer and to yourself. The horizontal plane feels very broad and expansive with a great sense of earthly power to dance. The vertical has quality of height and depth, narrow feelings and controlled emotion. The sagittal plane actually feels like dancing in a corridor with the idea of travelling forwards and the concept of past present and future in terms of time. The dimensional cross has meditative quality similar to *tai chi* and evokes calming effect on the body and mind.

Laban's work is a very organic way of learning; the work grows within you through repetition and revisiting often the same study. The concept of Sacred Geometry is very new to me, but one aspect is very clear - the idea of the 'divine proportions' of the human body. Dancing seems to push the limits of those proportions. Dance also breathes life into very static shapes; you feel as if almost anything is possible. His teachings on 'dynamics' have added many layers to my dancing. For me, his work teaches an accuracy of understanding of space, in performance space, and personal space in relation to others.

Laban's work provides a link between what could be seen on the surface as alien subjects in relation to each other, of geometry, theatre, mathematics and all forms of dance and the arts. The film provides an accessible way to begin to explore Laban's work and philosophy as an important method of dance and metaphysical experience.

*Dawn Turner*

## Reflections on 'Living Architecture'

### Reflections on 'Living Architecture – Rudolf Laban and the Geometry of Dance'

(Amanda Banks reflects on her experiences of Laban and dancing on the DVD 'Living Architecture – Rudolf Laban and the Geometry of Dance'. Amanda graduated from The London School of Contemporary Dance and has worked as a performer for ten years and is now a freelance dance practitioner, teaching and choreographing with children and youth) Ed.

Dawn and I first had an introduction to Laban through Anna Carlisle, when studying and dancing in a youth dance company with her. Since then I have had more conversations with Anna about Laban over more glasses of red wine than I can possibly remember.

What I do remember experiencing and am very aware of now as a mature practitioner is that Laban often misses the mark with young dancers. As Anna herself says, young dancers often just want to get on and dance, it is not part of their psychological makeup in that stage of their development to appreciate what Laban has to offer.

Having grown up dancing mainly disco, I realised I was getting a good training with Anna, but it still felt strangely incomprehensible to me.



In my professional training and career as a dancer I have not often come into contact with Laban influences. It is within the last few years taking part on the *Phoenix Project* that I have 'found' Laban. And I still feel I am at the start of a long journey into deepening my understanding; the more I experience Laban first-hand, the more I begin to embody the work and also appreciate how much more there is to

discover.

In thinking about Choreutics which feature on the DVD, I remember even as recently as 3 years ago, struggling to feel at home with the scales. I did not feel authentic as I moved through them, but rather that I was putting movements and positions on my body that did not fit. It was external; my body was going through the motions and my head was confused with the many different variations. It has been the constant demanding repetition of the scales and the freedom to experience them in different ways (in particular the rotating A-scale and the 'going the long way round' A-scale) that has had a slow drip-feed effect.

I now feel, though by no means perfect, authentic and absorbed with the scales. I find my body naturally finding its way through them and embodying them to a degree that allows me to experience the joyful sensation of moving through them. The planes from which these scales inevitably arise also now feel intrinsically known in both my body and head.

I experience a logical and melodic progression from the starting point of the dimensional cross, into the planes and further into the three-dimensional world of the scales and rings. I get a rich sense of exploration, playfulness and deeper reflective thought from them.

The dimensional cross is in its simplicity a powerful vehicle for producing a calming, grounding and meditative state. The planes have infinite potential to be explored in both an exciting, immediate, physical way and with a more internal understanding of what each can represent, for example the relationship possibilities and all round encompassing quality of the horizontal plane. Each of the scales evokes

a different physical sensation and potentially a different emotional tone, from the flowing and lyrical to the direct, strong and attacking. As I am still only just getting to grips with the 7-rings I would have to say I currently experience these as more of a physical challenge than an intellectual one, but can appreciate their metaphysical properties.

Having the chance to dance the scales and planes on the DVD was an honour and extremely rewarding. Valerie Preston-Dunlop demands attention to detail and accuracy, which is an engaging challenge for a dancer. It is through rehearsing and filming the DVD that much of my current understanding of Laban's spatial work has taken shape.

What excites me greatly is the metaphysical element to Laban's ideas. This comes across clearly in the interviews on the DVD. I was particularly taken with the three points on a triangle and what they represent and the Karmic nature of the 7-rings. The DVD not only fuels a desire to further extend my physical understanding of Laban's ideas but especially to engage with the philosophical underpinnings of them.

I have now begun to experience the harmonious effects and 'sacredness' of Laban's Choreutics. Dancing on the DVD has both enriched this experience and added an extra dimension of metaphysical thinking. I have no doubt that these experiences and reflections will stay with me and continue to deepen over the coming years. I think the making of this film has been a very necessary and worthwhile venture and I am extremely grateful to have been a part of it.

*Amanda Banks*

## Dorothy Madden (1912 - 2009) 'A Dance Life to Celebrate' by Valerie Preston Dunlop



Dorothy was 96 when she died, still with her mental faculties sharp, still with dance people visiting her, asking her for advice, still listening to their plans for future ploys and asking her to critique their writing on dance.

Although Dorothy was fundamentally an American Modern Dance educator and artist she had connections with Laban work from her student years at the *Liberal Arts Middlebury College* in Vermont. Even as early as 1940s, Middlebury had a Modern Dance Club and the leading person in it was Mary Louise Lee. Mary Lou had learned her dance through the Mary Wigman school, possibly the one in New York directed by Hanya Holm. So Dorothy's first performance opportunities were influenced by the German expressionist style.

A few years later in Washington, she danced and studied with Erica Thimey a Wigman émigré and with the

outstanding Wigman dancer Pola Nirenska. Intermixed with these experiences she took classes in New York and *Connecticut College* with the Modern Dance greats: Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Jose Limon, Anna Sokolow, Charles Weidman. Her dance appetite was broad - unlike many dancers of the period who were strictly partisan.

Her study of composition with the legendary and acerbic Louis Horst impressed her profoundly, and led her to concentrate on connecting technique with composition in her teaching, not a connection made by everyone. Louis turned to the techniques of the visual arts for his classes, something Dorothy was familiar with from her broad studies at Middlebury. She had majored in French and Music and showed a natural talent for languages, including Latin and Greek.

It was Louis' work that she brought to England. In 1962 Marie Crabbe engaged Dorothy to teach at *I M Marsh College*, a hotbed of teacher training in Laban's creative dance. It was an uncomfortable confrontation, creativity

versus technique, dance as experience versus dance as performance. The saga of her introduction of American Modern Dance methods in the next 10 years to teacher training, at Dartington Hall, is unfolded in the DVD *The American Invasion*. Because her technique class led into composition, she was able to make much better contact with Laban trained people than the Graham teachers - also arriving - who taught technique beautifully but in isolation.

Dorothy had already visited the Art of Movement Studio in 1956; she was on a world tour studying as she went, Decroux in Paris and Fan techniques in Tokyo. But she could not miss an opportunity to speak with Laban. She reported being impressed with Marion North's teaching of effort and intrigued by my teaching of dance history through the moods and drives, as I had learnt from Laban. She was to return twenty years later.

Dorothy's 30 year career at *Maryland University* saw her rise from being an Instructor in social dance, maypole dancing, square dancing, (learning it the night before she taught it) to retiring as a universally respected Professor Emeritus. She had fought both stealthily and overtly to get dance out of Physical Education and establish it as a



Dorothy at Dartington

Dance Department in its own right, and she succeeded. Further, and uniquely according to Rona Sande (late Head of Department, *University of California* at Santa Barbara), she succeeded in establishing a quasi-professional company integrated into the department and its teaching programme.

Always determined to upgrade the status of dance, just as Laban had in his day and in his way, Dorothy became the guinea pig for the new doctorate course at *New York University*. The innovation was that artists could offer original works of art as a major part of their assessment. Dorothy's was the first to offer Choreography with her suite *Always the Sea* so establishing dance practice as research.

When she retired from Maryland in 1977 aged 65, she continued her career in Europe. Already known in France from teaching composition for years at the *Centre International de Danse* summer sessions, she accepted a post at the Laban Centre to introduce MA study in Choreography and to help start a doctorate course. I was the doctorate student and so began a 30-year friendship forged by our mutual passion for dance and practical research, and for taking on the prejudices of academia. We exchanged knowledge. I learnt about the American dance grammars and she learned about Laban's grammars.

I was soon developing Choreological Studies as Laban Studies for dance as a theatre art. I could not have done it without the practical knowledge I gained from her: timing from Laban, timing from Cunningham, rhythm from Laban, rhythm from Humphrey and so on.

Shortly, I started the first experiments in refinding Laban's *Kammertanz* dances; Dorothy was part of it from the beginning. Because of her early dance experience of Wigman she had a feeling for Laban work, and being a more experienced choreographer than I she was able to suggest when I floundered. Her last gift was to sponsor the mounting of *Green Clowns* for the Manchester and Dartington 2008 celebrations.

Her own choreography was theatrical, ranging from stylish dances for musicals, to *Xero 6* - a suite commenting on human frailty - while her solo *Staff Meeting* for Ilana Snyder was greeted by the press as 'superbly witty'. Dorothy continued mentoring into her eighties in France, Italy and the Netherlands. Her avid interest in people, in art, in language, endeared her to so many people that she only refused invitations for a residency when she could no longer walk without a stick.

The verbal contributions to her Quaker funeral came from the heart, from the countless people who determined to be there and see her off with the tenderness that she gave to all her friends and colleagues. She will be sorely missed.

### *Valerie Preston-Dunlop*

Photos by courtesy of Dartington Hall Trust Archive

**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

**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

## Lifetime Award for Valerie Preston-Dunlop



Award given to Dr Valerie Preston-Dunlop

by the Laban Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies

In New York, December 2008 for Life Time Service in the promotion and development of Rudolf Laban's work.

(A Mobius Strip carved in beautifully polished wood)

## Report from the Courses Officer

The Training Committee is delighted to welcome Mary Ellen Coyte on to the team. Mary Ellen has completed the most recent Dance Leaders Course in Essex, followed by the CPD modules in Further Laban Studies and Choreography. So she has up to date knowledge of our most recent courses. Many members may remember meeting Mary Ellen at the LinC summer school in Eastbourne - a valuable source of Labanites! Mary Ellen and Mel Horwood, who has a background in both professional and community dance, and completed one of the first Laban Guild courses, are already making valuable contributions to the work of the committee, led by Janet Lunn as Chair and including Sheila McGivering and Ann Ward.

**The committee is still planning to start two Dance Leaders courses this year, one in Suffolk and one in Sussex.** Publicity promised by various agencies for the Suffolk course, in **Lowestoft**, is only just appearing so the start has been delayed until June 2009. We have a core of people who are very keen to take up places, particularly those who attended the information day on 28 March, so we are working hard to reach others in the area who would benefit from - and enjoy - the course. Offers of help with publicity from anyone in the region would be much appreciated.

Plans for a course in **Bexhill, near Eastbourne on the South Coast**, are still on schedule for a start in September 2009, but information on possible outlets for publicity would again be helpful. Information on both courses is available from Ann Ward, as below.

The committee is now concentrating on devising **training schemes for existing and potential tutors**. This is essential if the courses are to move on - or even continue, so it is forming a very important part of our work at the moment.

### **But we do have other courses?**

Anyone who has successfully completed our Dance Leaders Course, or who has a strong background in Laban based dance, is able to offer **the Laban Guild Foundation Course in Creative Dance** - a 30 hour course introducing

over 16s to Laban Analysis through the medium of creative dance. It has been very successful with lunch time or after school clubs, as an alternative to GCSE dance for less academic but keen young dancers in colleges with Sports Science students and with Youth Dance groups.

Any teacher of dance in schools, or running creative dance groups for children, can apply to run **the Laban Guild Certificated Courses in Creative Dance**. These offer schemes of work at four levels, all related to the National Curriculum. Attractive certificates of achievement are awarded to all those satisfying the criteria. The courses are supported by a pack of **Dance Ideas**, tried and tested dance lessons, available to anyone for a modest charge.

For details of all these courses, please contact the Courses Officer: Ann Ward, email: awardglenkeen@bigfoot.com

### *Ann Ward*

**Available from the Laban Guild**

**Dance Ideas:** A pack of 12 lesson plans, aimed mainly at KS 1 and 2 but adaptable for other levels. Follow these tried and tested plans or use them as starting points for your own developments. £12.00

**So you want to be a Leader?** A home study manual covering all important aspects of leadership, including a section on Responsibilities of a Leader and Risk Assessment. £7.50

**So you want to run a Dance Course?** A: home study manual on Marketing your Course, workshop or day of dance, together with invaluable advice on planning and providing a successful dance event. £7.50

**Policies of the Laban Guild:** Code of Ethics, Health and Safety, Child Protection, Equality and more, including guidelines for their implementation. **Free to Guild members** via email.

Contact:  
Ann Ward, email: awardglenkeen@bigfoot.com

# Diary of Events

## MAY

**Wed 20 - Sat 23 at 7:45pm**

**Suffolk Youth Theatre:** Midsummer Night's Dream  
Wolsey Theatre Ipswich (Producer: Michael Platt)  
Tickets: £12 Concessions £8  
Box Office: 01437 295900

## JULY

**Sat 11**

**Alison Curtis-Jones** from LABAN will be teaching a one-day Forsythe workshop at the University of Bedfordshire (Application form included in magazine)

**Mon 20 - Fri 24**

**Laban based summer school at Maynooth, Southern Ireland,** organised by Kildare County Council  
Email: nicola@kildarecoco.ie

**Fri 31**

**Movement Choir Training** day for those who would like to explore facilitating movement choirs.

Royal Holloway College, Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey  
Details: susi@thorntonclan.com 01784 433480

## AUGUST

**Sat 1**

**Movement Choir Event**

Royal Holloway College, Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey  
Details: susi@thorntonclan.com 01784 433480

**Sat 22 - Sat 29**

**LinCC Summer Course**

Pettanascoe, Northern Italy

Join us: on a hill, overlooking a lake in northern Italy in August 2009, by our own pool, dancing, morning and evening with like minded people, furthering their understanding of Laban fundamentals to deepen their creative process. Eat by the pool, the dining room or the terrace. Carry out your personal rituals in the open air, facing the rising sun. Become part of a supportive, considerate community. Ensure the continuation of a Laban residential holiday Course.

Further details: [www.laban-courses.co.uk](http://www.laban-courses.co.uk)

LinCC, Ivy Cottage, Clockhouse Lane East, Egham, Surrey, TW20 8PF susi@thorntonclan.com 01784 433480

## LABAN Creekside listings:

LABAN Creekside Box Office 020 8469 9500

## JUNE

**Mon 1 + Tue 2 at 7:30pm**

**TrAPPED, Tilted Productions** by award-winning choreographer Maresa von Stocker £12 / £8 (concessions)

**Mon 8 - Thu 11 at 7:30pm**

**MIXED BILL, BA2 Choreography Show**

£6 / £3 (concessions) An evening of fresh and varied short works choreographed by second year Dance Theatre students.

**Mon 15 + Tue 16**

**MIXED BILL, BA1 Performance Project**

£6 / £3 (concessions) First year students perform choreography by Susan Sentler, Gary Lambert, Zoi Dimitriou and Lizzi Kew-Ross.

**Fri 19 + Sat 20 at 7:30pm**

**MIXED BILL, One Year Programme Students End of**

**Year Show** £6 / £3 (concessions)

**Sat 27 from 2:30pm Tue 30 from 7:30pm**

**MIXED BILL, Laban Degree Show 2009** £6 / £3 (concessions)

## JULY

**Sat 4 at 2:30pm and 4:00pm**

**MIXED BILL Saturday Morning Children's Classes**

**End of Year Show** Tickets: £3 / £1 (concessions)

Booking via Liz Atkin 020 8691 8600

**Sun 12 at 7:30pm**

**MIXED BILL CAT End of Year Show**

£6 / £3 (concessions)

Promising young dancers from Laban's Centre of Advanced Training (CAT) performing a varied programme in an end of year showcase.

## Other Theatre Listings

## JUNE

**Thu 4 - Sat 6**

**Wayne McGregor/ Random Dance: Entity**

Sadler's Wells Enquiries 020 7771 2000

**Thu 4 - Sat 6**

**Rambert Eternal Light Tour including Hush and Infinity**

Grand Theatre, Leeds Box Office 0870 121 4901

**Tue 23 - Sat 27**

**Sylvie Guillem/ Robert Lepage/ Russell Maliphant:**

**Econnagata**

Sadler's Wells

Enquiries 020 7771 2000

**Fri 26 at 7:00pm**

**Shunt Dance Company: ShapeShift**

Newington Dance Space Box Office 020 7241 4193

**Theatre of Angels presents:**

**LEGACY**

**A new play by Martin Sharp**

**Cast includes Kathryn Pogson and Kyle Riley**

on national tour from May 7 2009

**The tragic yet life-affirming true story of heiress Dorothy Whitney Elmhirst is brought to stage by award winning actress Kathryn Pogson in 'Legacy', a new play by Theatre of Angels opening at the Tacchi-Morris Centre, Taunton on May 7 2009 as part of a national tour.**

What kind of legacy is it to be born into one of the richest families in the world, but lose your mother and father before you are seventeen years old? What if you then fall in love, only to lose your husband in the First World War?

Venue: **The Barn Theatre, Dartington Hall, Totnes, Devon**

Dates and Times: 15 & 16 May

Tickets: £12.50, £11.50 (concessions), £5 (students)

Box Office: 01803 847070 or [www.dartington.org](http://www.dartington.org)

Venue: **Steyning Arts Festival, East Sussex**

Dates and Times: 26 May at Steyning School Theatre

Tickets: £8, £6 (concessions)

Box Office: 01903 812 062 or [www.steyningfestival.co.uk](http://www.steyningfestival.co.uk)

Venue: **Ellen Terry Barn Theatre, Tenterden, Kent**

Dates and Times: 29 May

Tickets: members only

Box Office: 01424 440 484

Venue: **Charles Cryer Studio, Carshalton, Surrey**

Dates and Times: 23 June at

Tickets: £12, £9 (concessions)

Box Office: 020 8770 6990

Venue: **Burton Taylor Studio, Oxford Playhouse**

Dates and Times: 25 & 26 June

Tickets: £10, £8 (concessions)

## Laban Guild Patrons:

Sir Walter Bodmer, William Elmhirst, William Forsythe, Bernard Hepton

**President:** Anna Carlisle MBE

**Vice Presidents:** Sheila McGivering, Dr Geraldine Stephenson, Gordon Curl

## Laban Guild Council:

Maggie Killingbeck: - Chair; Jo Knappek: - Secretary; Elizabeth Farquar: - Treasurer; Janet Harrison - Membership Secretary; Bobbie Millar - Conferences and Workshops; Ann Ward - Courses Officer; Mary Cormack - Minuting Secretary; Darren Royston; Darrell Aldridge; Sadie Hunt; Selina Martin; Cathy Washbrook

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[www.labanguild.org](http://www.labanguild.org)

Box Office: 01865 305335 or [www.oxfordplayhouse.com](http://www.oxfordplayhouse.com)

Venue: **New End Theatre, Hampstead, London**

Dates and Times: 29 June at 7:30pm

Tickets: £18, £14 (concessions)

Box Office: 0870 033 2733 or [www.offwestendtheatres.co.uk](http://www.offwestendtheatres.co.uk)

Venue: **Quay Arts Centre, Newport, Isle of Wight**

Dates and Times: 3 July at 7:30pm

Tickets: £7, £6 (concessions)

Box Office: 01983 822490 or [www.quayarts.org](http://www.quayarts.org)

Venue: **Forest Arts Centre, New Milton, Hants**

Dates and Times: 4 July at 7:30pm

Tickets: £11, £10 (concessions)

Box Office: 01425 612393 or [www3.hants.gov.uk/forest/bookings](http://www3.hants.gov.uk/forest/bookings)

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**Wed May 20 - Sat May 23 7.45**

**£12 - concessions £8**

**BOX OFFICE 01473 295900**

**[www.suffolkyouththeatre.co.uk](http://www.suffolkyouththeatre.co.uk)**



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