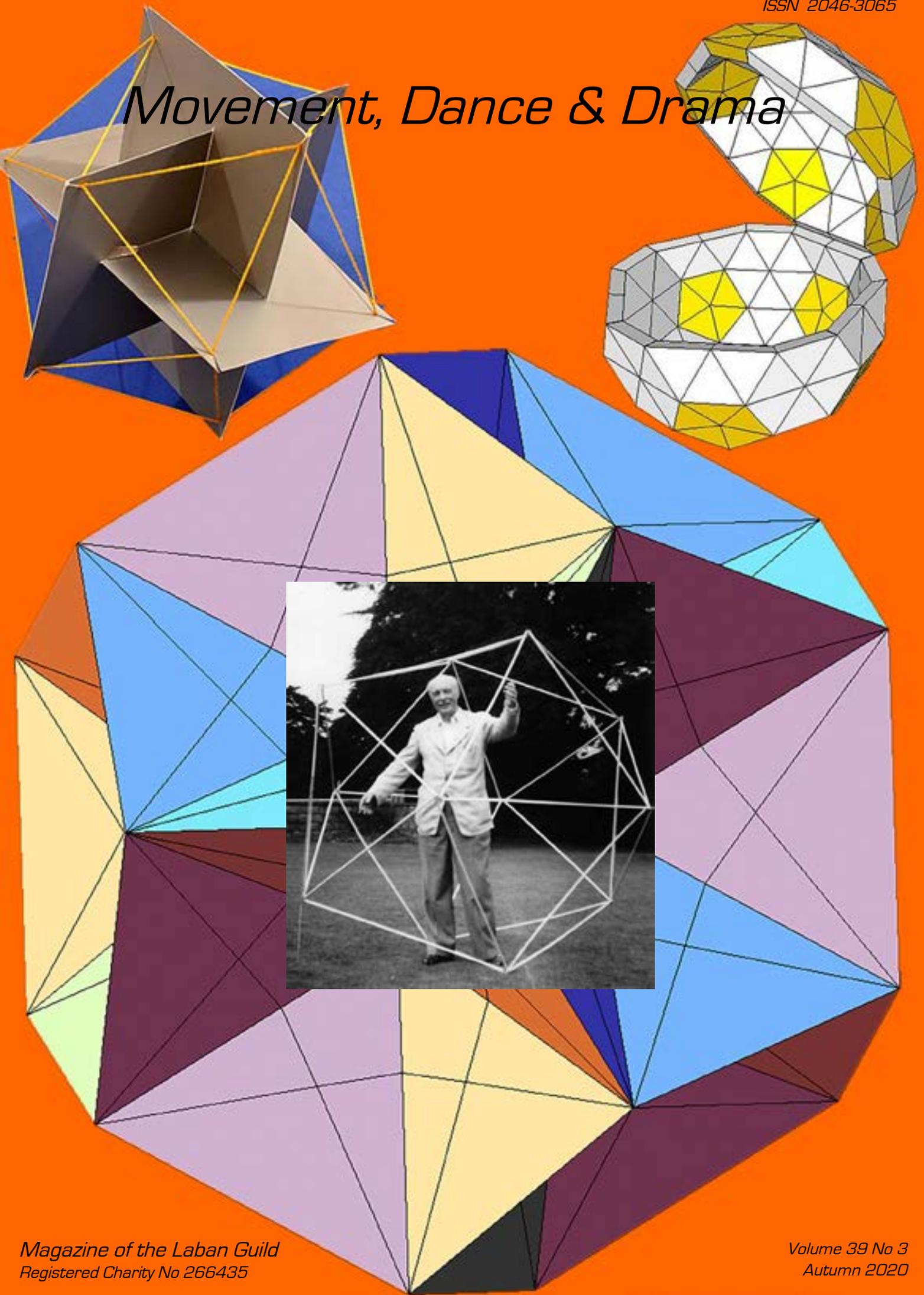


Movement, Dance & Drama





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Insiders/Outsiders

As part of the on-going Insiders/Outsiders Festival, on Wednesday October 28th at 6pm, Dr Marion Kant (University of Cambridge), co-author of *Hitler's Dancers: German Modern Dance and the Third Reich*, will talk about Rudolf Laban, and his embracing of Nazi ideology. Attendance is by Zoom but the talks are recorded and they can be accessed after the event. For further information see <https://insidersoutsidersfestival.org/autumn-programme/>

Cover images

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Rudolf Laban
Courtesy of the NRCD Ref: L-F-3-68

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Icosahedra and stellations

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Editorial

We are in times of great uncertainty in terms of Covid-19, not knowing if we will be in lockdown, allowed to meet others in our homes, how many we can meet with at one time, and from how many households those friends can come. Thank goodness then for technology and, for those of who have access, the way it has enabled us to meet over the last six months. This was exemplified by the virtual summer school held in August, via Zoom, which, as reported in this edition, brought together Guild members from far and wide. It is uncertain too how the Guild will move forwards but, whatever format the magazine takes in the future, the support of the membership in contributing to it will remain essential. In delving through past issues, for the brief article in this magazine, I can only reiterate what I read that the editor, Marjorie Bergin, wrote in the November 1960 issue: "Dancing together, talking together, meeting old and new members: these are most satisfying and pleasurable. What can you do? ... You can write articles, letters, questions, suggestions, comments adverse or favourable: ... [we] will welcome them all. ... What are you going to contribute?" I look forward to hearing from you.

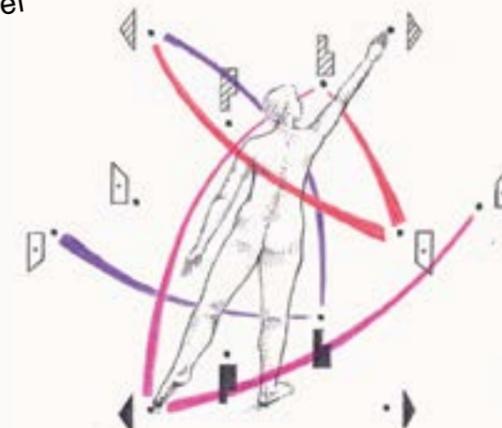
Post Script:

It is with great sadness that Council has learned that Gordon Curl died peacefully in his sleep on October 14th; Gordon served the Guild faithfully and edited this magazine for many years. A full obituary and appreciation will be in the next issue.

With the future of the Guild being discussed, and the format of the magazine likely to change, it is timely to reflect on what an amazing resource is the Magazine of the Laban Guild. I say this not because I have been editing it for the past ten years but because, even with a cursory glance at the index (<https://www.labanguild.org.uk/magazineindex>), it is clear that many key figures from the dance world of the last seventy or so years have made contributions to the magazine. Not least of course, are the thoughts and writings of Rudolf Laban, some of which he presented himself at AGMs in his lifetime – the president's Address at the first AGM in 1947 for example – or were presented by others, such as his "The Importance of Dancing" read by Lisa Ullmann at the AGM in 1959, the first AGM following Laban's death, all of which are in the magazine. Unsurprisingly perhaps, volume 22 from 1959, published several items by Laban, including the AGM lecture and several shorter items (some unfinished) such as "The Educational and Therapeutic Value of Dance" (translated by Leni Heaton) and "Meaning". Some of his work, such as "An Extract from an Address to a Meeting for Community Dance in 1936" published

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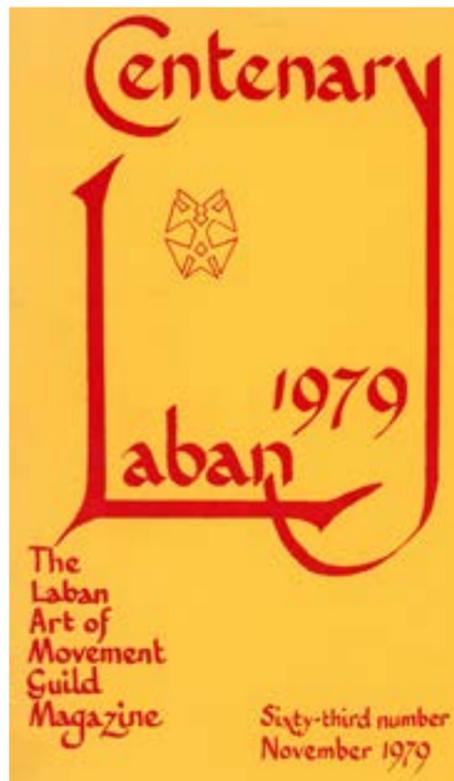
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Laban Guild Magazine Index

Dr Clare Lidbury

in 1974 (number 52), or "Notes on Choral Dancing" published in 1969 (number 43), was published in the magazine several years after his death.

The Laban Lectures are also well documented, with the lectures by many presenters published in full, including those by well-known Laban figures - such as Lisa Ullmann (1960), Joan Russell (1974), Roderike Lange (1979), Warren Lamb (1986), Jean Newlove (1990), Valerie Preston Dunlop (1993 and 2012), and Walli Meier (1998, 2011) - and lectures by those not instantly recognisable as Laban figures, such as Peter Brinson (1984). There are also obituaries and tributes recalling and praising the lives of many Guild members, some of whom have achieved public and international recognition, such as Geraldine Stephenson, some of whom have much less public recognition perhaps but who made great contribution as teachers and college lecturers perpetuating Laban's work, such as Athalie Knowles and Hettie Loman for example, and those who quietly served the Guild in many ways, making a considerable contribution to its running and continuation.



The range of material covered by articles in the magazine since its first publication is formidable. Of course, the focus of the magazine is Laban's work and particularly his work in education, but there are many articles applying his theories to other activities. Thus we find articles on architecture, healthcare, drama, theatre and acting, music, gymnastics and sport. There are also several articles on notation systems, although the majority are on Labanotation and written by Ann Hutchinson Guest, and several reports of International Council of Kinetography Laban (ICKL) meetings. Some articles are theoretical – those by Gordon Curl on aesthetics for example - and some are reflections on Laban's work in practice, written by teachers. There are also book reviews, critiques of performances and exhibitions, reports of events and, in later issues, many, many photographs which supplement the articles or capture the countless Guild events which have been organised over time.

For academics and (dance) historians, it is not just the main articles which are of interest – for example, the lists of members, who were recorded for many years in the magazine, show how more men became members as time went on, and how widespread Laban's work was across the country at different times. The editorial of issue 27, from November 1961, gives evidence of the interest in Laban's work: "it does not seem unduly optimistic to prophesy that during the next few years we may be numbering our members in thousands rather than in hundreds".

Undoubtedly the magazine reflects how times have changed (in terms of writing style or technological developments in printing and photographic reproduction for example) but some things do not for, as I have done frequently, past editors have asked members for articles and reflections on their training or work. For example, K. N. Tansley's reminiscences of being a member of the first One Year Course, sponsored by the Ministry of Education, at the Studio in Manchester in 1948-49 (number 53, from 1974), as well as giving information about what was taught, gives insight about the personalities of the teachers there: Geraldine Stephenson "bright and cheerful every morning at 9.15"; Lisa Ullmann with her "relentless drive of the perfectionist"; Sylvia Bodmer "with her warmth, her kindness, her smile"; and Rudolf Laban in whom the writer recognised "warmth underneath the often austere, even forbidding manner". Such memories give flesh to the facts and are invaluable to all in giving a fuller picture of life at the Studio. These personal memories are of as much importance as the writings and lectures of the key dance figures which have featured in the magazines.

The Laban Guild moving with the times...

Darren Royston on behalf of Council

The Council has been meeting frequently on Zoom, at this time of the pandemic, with the main agenda item of 'ideas for the future'. Facing the fact that we are a small number of people on the council, working voluntarily, and needing to ensure that the aims of the organisation are achieved, we have been preparing plans for change to be considered fully at the next AGM.

Members responded to the initial document of proposals, giving their views on how we can move forward as an organisation, and identifying what needed further clarification. There was no desire for the organisation to be dissolved; rather we received many positive and constructive suggestions on how to facilitate the changes necessary for survival. There is agreement that our presence needs to become more online, so that we embrace the culture of the world-wide-web, which can clearly keep networks alive globally, can unite those who are using and developing the ideas proposed by Rudolf Laban, and can raise the profile of this work to a wider group of people and organisations. Our mission continues: to promote and

advance the study and practice of movement and dance, and to this end we hope to become the umbrella organisation that enables networks to be maintained between practitioners. This was the idea our first President, Rudolf Laban, proposed in his first address to the Laban Guild in 1947. Next year will be our 75th anniversary, so it is fitting that our celebrations will not only be about the things we have achieved, but also how we can adapt as an organisation to fulfil these aims in the future.

Members have met and discussed all the ideas proposed by the council, and online Zoom meetings have allowed questions to be answered and strategies to be considered. While we have to ensure that the work we propose can be managed by our small number of voluntary trustees and council members, there is also a belief that the new structure for the organisation can realise the vision for international expansion. The constitution, which governs our charitable status, will need to change in order to match our clearly focused aims and the specific way we can operate. We have

been in direct contact with the charity commission to receive advice about these changes, to gain support for our proposals and to ascertain how public physical meetings can occur in this time of the pandemic. One decision is that the AGM will be postponed to 2021 which will then combine two years (2020 and 2021), and it is hoped that this can then be a physical meeting. At this AGM we plan to have very definite proposals to be voted on, and to achieve this, the council have set up working parties to develop the initial ideas into fully workable policies.

Currently two working parties have been established - one to look at the online element, and the second to consider how physical groups can stay connected in a dynamic network. The vision is that groups will be supported by the Laban Guild network, operating as autonomous groups, which have been called 'hubs'. These hubs will allow different groups to operate in all the various areas of work connecting to Laban, including education, performance, and therapy. With the online network, there is potential for these groups to be international and multi-cultural. The working parties are

considering both the vision which all those involved with our organisation currently share, and the action that needs to be undertaken. The idea, supported by the charity commission, of active subscribers rather than passive membership, will mean that the future of the organisation remains in the hands of those who wish to devote time and energy to further our aims. Volunteer trustees will monitor the progress, and encourage active involvement from all individuals, groups, companies and institutions who have a passion for movement and dance as an art, a pedagogy or a therapeutic activity.

The future of the Laban Guild is in your hands, and indeed in your feet, and of course we should say, in your whole dynamic dancing body! We hope that as many members as possible continue to be involved in developing these ideas for change, and give as much physical time and effort as they can in this consultation period with Council. As soon as we have a date for the 2021 AGM we will be informing members, so that we can unite under our common interest, and face the future together.

Laban Guild Virtual Summer School 2020

Ann Ward

Sadly, we were unable to offer a "real" three day summer school this year, but the Movement Choir Project team, Susi Thornton, Maggie Killingbeck and Janet Lunn had undertaken a virtual Movement Choir at the beginning of August, about which Noeleen McGrath wrote:

I took part in the digital movement choir on a sunny Saturday in August. I approached this experience with some trepidation, as, since lockdown, much of my work is now done on screen, and have been finding this exhausting. I should have known better - the Laban magic, as ever kicked in immediately and all thoughts of exhaustion were banished to the four winds.

Maggie Killingbeck, Janet Lunn and Susi Thornton each lead three separate sections, allowing exploration of both creative opportunities and technique. The music used was Bill Withers' 'Lean on Me' and we had very clear instructions on how each section corresponded to the music, which gave a focused structure to the piece.

Although the space in my living room is limited, I really felt I had danced; I enjoyed especially the opportunity to use available surfaces - sofas, fireplace and table - to explore aspects of leaning, using contrasting effort qualities. We had the chance to develop our own motif and refine this as the morning continued, and putting all the sections together felt like a 'real' movement choir. Although we were separated physically, the final gesture of extending arms either side, gave a satisfying feeling that there had been a meaningful connection with all who took part. Thanks again to Susi, Maggie and Janet for such an uplifting and energising experience.

The team were offering another virtual Movement Choir on Saturday 29 August but, when Pam Anderton said in a casual conversation that it was a shame we couldn't have a virtual summer school as well, Maggie took up the idea. She discussed it with the others in the team, and they offered to extend the day - to include taking a practical introductory session - and then inviting Viv Bridson, a senior and very experienced Laban practitioner who takes regular classes at The Place, to offer a masterclass. The Movement Choir would then take place in the afternoon, followed by "A Chance to Chat" – an opportunity for the day's participants to comment and talk to each other via Zoom.

The day was free for Guild members but, in order to enable interaction via Zoom, numbers were going to have to be limited, so it was decided to extend the invitation to those who had previously attended a Virtual Movement Choir or a real Summer School; we were sorry that we were not able to extend the invitation to the whole of the membership at the time. The take up was immediate and very encouraging. At quite short notice we enrolled 28 members to add to the staff already involved. These included participants from Spain, Ireland and even China.

Not everyone took part in every session, but there were at least sixteen for each session, with some participants working for the whole day. A similar number stayed on for the "Chat" and expressed their delight and appreciation of the day, and the chance to interact with others. This was also facilitated in the Movement Choir where, at one point, small groups of participants were put into break out rooms and invited to work together to make short sequences. This was a great success and

people felt they really had been able to interact with other members and “dance together”.

Feedback from the day includes this, from Pauline Cockburn:

The Laban Guild Summer School is a wonderful and unique experience, one that I have grown to cherish more and more, having the chance to dance with the ‘Laban family’ who so readily welcome people to join from all ages and experience. So to join the virtual summer school was a must. I was there for most of the day. Vivien Bridson paired us off via the screen, I felt a strong connection with my partner, it was quite emotional and I genuinely felt that I was dancing with someone. During the afternoon I joined the movement choir, again there was a strong sense of moving together and I enjoyed the use of ‘break out’ rooms, where I joined two others and we developed a short motif together. A memorable day and I think Laban would be very pleased to see how technology was embraced to continue to move and work together across the world and make the best of this situation. Thank you for a positive experience.

And this from Mel Horwood:

Thank you to all who helped to make it happen. Viv Bridson was delightful in her charismatic way. I particularly liked the notion of dancing intently with someone I had never met before.

While Yang Zhao wrote:

I took the first two workshops of the summer school

Excerpts from *Movement and Meaning* Laban Lecture, Feb 14th 1970 Given by Louis Arnaud Reid

Abridged by Pam Anderton

In this lecture I want to consider – and to compare and contrast - the idea of human movement as meaningful, in two different fields, games, sports, athletics (etc.) on the one hand, and *movement* as an art, on the other.

Many movements in games or athletics or gymnastics have great positive aesthetic value; but it is wrong to jump to the conclusion that they are art, any more than the beautiful flight of a bird is art. Again, though to some spectators a game may appear dramatic, it is quite wrong to assume that the players involved are at all like actor-artists on the stage, who are performing a drama to be apprehended aesthetically.

... the central concept of the aesthetic is not expression but *embodiment* of a unique kind and the kind of expression that there is in art is transformed in its embodiment in a medium. In art, a person may express himself, express feelings and emotions. In a very different way, the player of a game may express feelings of aggression, triumph, or sheer animal spirits. Or, if one watches the sometimes extended and elaborate preparation of an athlete on his mark for a sprint or long jump, it certainly looks as though something very intense is going on, and a tension released in the action. ... So it is wrong to say that art just *is* expression of feeling or

when I was at home in China. They were inclusive and open level. I think many elements or instructions and the ways of improvisation/choreography were like when I had dance classes in studios (professional level). My educational background is dance but I had not been active in dancing for a while because I have been focused more on studies of dance (two Masters and a PhD). My mom joined in too and she also liked it. We both were impressed by people who could continue to dance for three hours! And I think I have to do some more exercise and apply the dance knowledge to the body for the physical aspect as well as the creative aspect. The summer school morning sessions were different from the previous Movement Choir Project workshops, but there were some commonalities in that we were asked to pay attention to breath, body parts (isolation, leading), and emotions, such as anticipation and resistance etc. When we danced virtually, we sometimes danced with partners remotely. Thank you for organising the events.

So, many thanks to Maggie Killingbeck for setting this up and leading the first session, to Maggie, Janet and Susi for their contributions to the Movement Choir, to Viv Bridson for presenting an inspirational masterclass, and to all those taking part for their enthusiastic participation and contributions.

Look out for notice of further virtual Movement Choirs and, of course, we hope to run another REAL three day Summer School next year.

emotion. ... Art is the presentation of something in form, to be enjoyed aesthetically; it is not just the expression of your, or my, feelings.

...art expresses ideas. ... Philosophy, science, history... express ideas, but they are not art. Certainly in drama, poetry, the novel, the dance, there is expression of ideas; but this does not differentiate them.

In most, I think, all, art, there is an expressive element. Thoughts, ideas, experiences, feelings about things...are present in the artist who is making or about to make and the making somehow expresses them through the use of a medium. ... It is true of traditional painting and sculpture and dance. ... In architecture and dance alike, gravitational pull, and the overcoming of it, is enormously symbolic. ... The meaning of the architectural form is *in* it. The meaning of a dance, similarly, is known only in the dance itself. And ‘understanding’ here is itself a living event, a living-through-experience of the work in its full concreteness. What ... are we to think about the claims that games, and some athletics, are forms of art, carried out by artists? Existentially there is a close relationship between art and craft: good artists are craftsmen, and good craftsmen are at least sometimes artists. ... The aim of the artist ... is to produce a form for aesthetic contemplation. ... In

pursuance of the game, a player may be exquisite, often aesthetically exquisite. But to produce exquisite strokes for contemplation is not part of his dominating motive as he is actually engaged in the game.

At points the line between sport and art is difficult to draw. A crucial case is figure skating: can this be clearly distinguished from dancing on ice? ... Could it be that the concern of judges for smoothness, rhythm, grace, etc., is a concern for, strictly speaking, *functional* perfections, and not genuine artistic qualities? The judge in a competitive event has to judge a gross movement, a single continuous action which sometimes takes place very quickly. Is it just (e.g.) efficiency of flow which he is assessing, efficiency which might be marked more objectively by, say, a computer-cum-slow-motion-filming machine? Is it truly ‘artistic’ quality? If so then a judge, a man of aesthetic perception, is required. No machine could assess original artistic value.

Through discipline and mastery, he (the gymnast) has attained a new potential of freedom. Taking his skill of movement as something he is master of, he is now able ... to be something of an artist. His sense of the value of movement may be said to be expressed in the movements and embodied in the new free form which he gives to it.

Whatever we think of these activities as containing artistic elements, or even as being art and not sport, there is no doubt that *dance* is on the other side of the somewhat vague border between art and sport. ... Dance as an art fulfils the general conditions of art. Movement in dance has aesthetic purpose, the purpose of creating an object for aesthetic contemplation, in this case a complex pattern of postures and gestures.

Dance, like art generally, is expressive in various ways – though we must add at once, expression transformed in embodiment. ... The form of dance, like the form in all art, is a ‘symbol’ in a unique sense; it is a symbol to which I have given the technical name ‘embodiment-symbol’. Meaning in dance is only apprehended by paying acute attention to the significant form – attention given in one way by the dancer, in another way by the spectator. This is different in kind from the sporting attention given to the movements in games.

Dance is not a complicated organisation of life’s gestures, nor even a constructive supplement to them: gesture is the *medium* of dance, and the medium is *used* in the creative transformation of art. ... The creation of dance, like the creation of any art, is a discovery of meaning which only comes into being when the dance is made and carried out. ... But dance is not just expression of something already there implicitly, and made explicit in the dance. It is (once again) discovery of new feelings, ideas, meanings.

The movements of dance, to which we give the most intense attention, do not fall into the same category as the movement in life outside dance, more or less stereotyped, often biologically stereotyped. Further a dance is a highly complex construction of the medium of movement, aesthetically organised, completely individual in the sense of possessing a concrete integrity unique in each dance.

... One of the reasons why dance is so important, in itself, and as education, is that the transcendent aesthetic meaning is discovered in the actual living experience of created, but profoundly felt, bodily movements. ... The physical movements of dance are not simply means to the ‘virtual’ and then forgotten; the physical movements are an inseparable part of the total thing which is the art.

All that has been said on embodied meaning has a bearing on alleged differences between two classes of dance, dance (a) with a story and (b) what is called ‘pure’ dance. ... the story is a general theme upon which a dance is constructed. Rudolf Laban in his book *The Mastery of Movement* mentions the story of Adam and Eve. ... He asks: “Can an actress represent Eve plucking an apple from a tree in such a way that a spectator who knows nothing of the biblical story is made aware of both her aims, the tangible and the intangible?” ... The story becomes transformed and is made into a new thing in its embodiment in the medium: the new thing is the dance.

... By ‘pure’ dance is usually meant dance without a story or programme, or perhaps one so simple and general that it might be stated in a sentence. ... The story in dance is done into dance: in that sense it is as pure as anything can be. Dance is never pure in the sense of being only a pattern of sheer movement in space: dance is not a moving sculpture: it can never be as pure as that, and would not be dance if it were.

... Most scholastic education is acquired through the use of words or other symbols. These symbolise ideas of various kinds, which in turn give us increased understanding of the world. But experience of the arts in general, and of dance in particular, is direct knowledge of meaning, unique, unparalleled, untranslatable – and it is given only by active participation in the arts. There is no substitute for it.

... Dance is of course only one of the arts; everyone cannot dance. But the development of perceptive art-experience – dance or any other – in education is needful and urgent, particularly perhaps in a day and age when the young are revolting against so much in civilisation that is unreal and artificial.

Members’ Classes

Due to Covid 19 physical classes are not possible. Contact the members below as they may be offering on-line classes.

Adult Movement and Dance in Belfast

Contact: **Brenda McKee**

Email: brendamckee@btinternet.com

‘Third Age Dance’ in Cambridge

Contact: **Maddy Tongue**

01223 302030

Weekly Drop in Classes

led by Viv Bridson

Held at The Place which is due to open in September

Weekly Workshops

led by Jenny Frankel

Contact: 07970 536643

Email: jennyfrankel.laban@gmail.com

