

# *Movement, Dance & Drama*





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**Front:**  
Rudolf Laban - 1937  
“Movement is more or less living architecture, living through changes of position but also through cohesion. This architecture created by human movement is formed by pathways tracing forms in space, and we call those forms ‘trace-forms’.”

**Back**  
Rudolf Laban  
‘Spatial form of powerful intention’  
*A Vision of Dynamic Space*

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## Editorial

As I write this editorial we are in the slow process of coming out of lockdown from the Covid-19 pandemic. Amongst many other changes for most of us it has meant the end of our normal dance practice and a move to the development of an alternative on-line, virtual practice. However, if the technological demands of such practice are beyond our skills, means, or we simply don’t have internet coverage, we can’t engage, and that is very frustrating. Nonetheless it is very timely that Darren Royston has contributed a lively article about his experiences of teaching and choreographing on-line. If you would like to write about the movement and dance projects you have developed or taken part in during lockdown, or on the ways you have adapted your own practice, please do submit something for the next edition of the magazine. Rosie Manton and Lynnette Gladding responded to my call for articles in the last edition, and have written interestingly and informatively on two quite different applications of Laban’s work.

I look forward to returning to my *tango salon* classes but, while we are socially distancing, that won’t be for some time; perhaps I should write something on choreutics and eukinetics in tango dancing while I’m waiting.

## “In these Dramatic Times...” how to use the Laban Approach to activate Online Dimensions

*Darren Royston*



I am writing this article from Bangkok. I came here at the start of the year to work with the Grand Opera Thailand – but productions have been postponed due to the pandemic. Like many others all around the world, the way to interact while in isolation has been the online format. For me, this has included teaching, performing and choreographing online.

I am grateful that my Laban-based training has offered me a way to adapt to this online format. In Thailand, it is customary that performers take a moment to thank their teachers before they begin a performance – the Thailand Cultural Centre has a shrine next to the main stage for this spiritual activity. So, I thought it would be appropriate, while writing this article from Thailand, to credit some of my own teachers who first gave me insight into how Laban’s ideas could be adapted in new situations, and share with you some of these

## Future of the Guild - update from Council

By now all members of the Laban Guild will have received a letter following the comments received from members after our letter in April. We are hoping to hear that a physical, rather than virtual, AGM will be possible in the autumn: before the AGM we will send the revised Constitution, which the Charity Commission has agreed subject to approval by the membership at an AGM. We will also resend the Annual Report, including the agenda for the AGM and nomination forms.

Please make sure your membership is up to date if you want to vote at the AGM.

We look forward to meeting together when it becomes possible.

## Laban Guild President

We are delighted to let you know that Vice President Gordon Curl has accepted Council’s invitation to become President, he replaces Anna Carlisle who stepped down earlier this year.

practical suggestions and exercises that I have found really useful recently.

### Rudolf Laban – adapting through history (with thanks to Valerie Preston-Dunlop)

I first learnt the history of Rudolf Laban while listening to informative lectures from Valerie Preston-Dunlop at the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance (now Trinity Laban). Rudolf Laban moved between many countries, and had to adapt his application of movement study to different environments, including during times of emergency, struggle and uncertainty. His work was applied to all areas of the performing arts, so it is not surprising that his movement and dance principles can be highly relevant when we are all faced with the new challenge of communicating creatively through the online medium.

Whatever device we use to connect online, we are constantly reminded that we are trying to communicate a three-dimensional art through a two-dimensional medium. When on business meetings or chatting with friends, I find myself trying to remain fixed, sitting still and composed, with my face in the frame and without getting distracted. It seems the requirement is to remain flat, as we know we cannot physically break through the screen. The ideal contact is face-to-face and fixed, however, to become creative in the online format, the first thing I have found is that this notion of fixed static “picture-framing” has to

be challenged. We do have a way to connect beyond the screen to the space of the person in front of us by being aware of what Laban called our **kinesphere** and by establishing **creative harmonic interactions**. I have learnt that Physical 2D can become Virtual 3D if we activate our kinesthetic imagination, which our muscle memory has thankfully stored somewhere in our pre-lockdown, free-moving, bodies.

### The Spiral Twist (with thanks to Geraldine Stephenson)

When we stare into our computer screens placed in front of us, there is a tendency to perform with only the front of our bodies – the membrane that seems primarily connected with this flat surface. To be creative, we need to have awareness of the space all around us, including behind us. We need to be able to feel we can connect with areas in our kinesphere that we cannot see, or cannot reach easily. I am reminded of an amazing exercise Geraldine Stephenson taught me when she came to lead a workshop to my students at RADA. In the studio movement class we found it necessary to explore those hidden spaces of our kinespheres. This technique can be used to give depth to motion towards the screen initiated with the front of the body. An example of this exercise is as follows:

*From standing facing front, flat to the audience, begin to explore the space all around you with one working leg, while keeping the foot in contact with the floor. This leg could explore all directions, some easier to reach than others. Now explore other locations that go to the opposite side of the body, past your centre line. Let this stretch create a twist of the torso. Find that super-extension with your foot always remaining contact on the floor. Cross behind the supporting leg, going to the other side as far as you can.*

*There is usually a natural tendency that the arm of the same side would follow the direction of the leg, which could then turn the body to face a different front in the room. By deciding that, above all, the body should face forward in the room, the upper body and lower body would develop counter-pull opposition.*

*As this spatial twist occurs, the arm of the opposite side can discover the same location that the working leg had reached into. In fact, with the arm hanging, it can circle the area around the ankle of this opposite leg. The spatial projection from the fingers connects to that same area, circling in a spiral.*

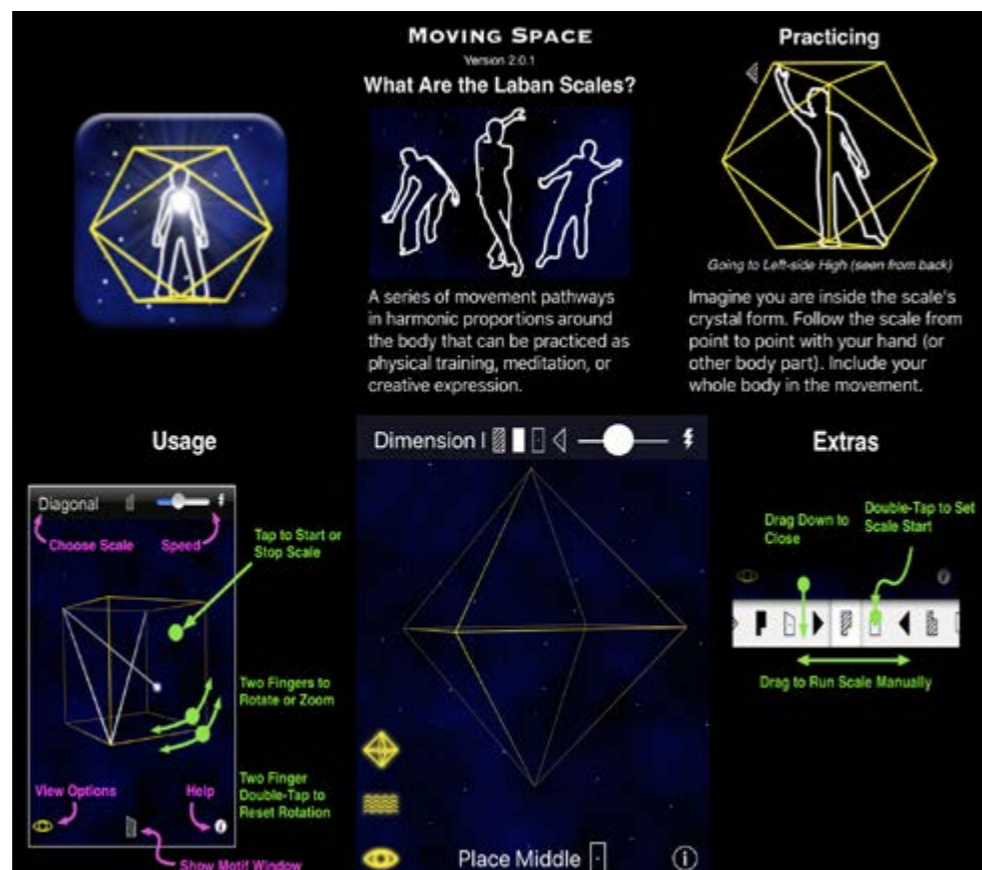
*Now return to the starting position facing forward, but allow your kinaesthetic awareness to remain connected to this newly perceived area. As you gesture with the same leg again, keep that connection to the opposite arm, and sense a feeling of three-dimensionality.*

Geraldine asked the actors to be aware of these **spiral**

**twists** that could be found in the body. In my teaching of movement and dance for two-dimensional screen performance, I have encouraged performers to find these hidden spaces in their own kinesphere. These are the places we do not habitually connect with. These types of exercises can give performers an awareness of the counter-opposition that can be potentially connected to, whenever a gesture is made only using the front of the body. I have seen how this awareness enables performers to fight against becoming fixed into a flattened frame and actively communicate this three-dimensional feeling.

### Three-Dimensional Diagonal Tension (with thanks to Jean Newlove)

Space in front of us also needs to be activated with spatial tension. The **Laban Scales** based on the Platonic Solids train the mover to be aware of geometric oppositional forces. *MOVING SPACE: The Interactive, 3D Compendium*



of the **Laban Scales**, an app created by Brenton Cheng, which can be downloaded for free at this time, presents the scales of movement as abstract lines in 3D space, using Laban directional symbols along with options to display pathways in space, or the peripheral lines making the edges of the geometric shapes. You can easily alter the speed at which the scale is drawn, change the starting point, and vary the viewpoint so it can help your mind understand how to map space. The cursor guides you through the sequence of moves, so easy to follow when practicing in lockdown.

I believe **movement scales** are vital to systematically train the body to become aware of the spatial tensions that give gestures three-dimensionality. I was reminded of a class where I was assisting Jean Newlove at Drama Studio London, teaching the Diagonal Scale in front of a mirrored wall. As we reached one side of our bodies towards forward-high-open, all the students had the tendency to

flatten the forward diagonal. It seemed that by seeing their limbs in the reflection in the mirror, the movers assumed they were making diagonals in the cube, but in fact the forward gradient had been lessened. It was as if the sight of themselves on the flat surface of the mirror had changed their kinaesthetic perception. This reminded me of hearing about Laban's own experience in Berlin teaching the dancers of the State Opera, and his need to find a way to prevent the dancers relying on looking into the mirror to train the extensions of their limbs. Without being able to see the mirrored reflection, it became possible to create more dynamic architectonic positions, sensed within the body itself.

The online screen can act just like this mirror when learning dance online, stopping the spatial dynamics being sensed, so much so that, when instructing moves and demonstrating actions, I have now found a need to emphasise the **spatial tensions that produce three-dimensional scaffolding** - even if in the physical studio the same move would not need to be given such an emphasis.

### Effort & Shape Affinity (with thanks to Warren Lamb)

Connecting concepts together and combining other complementary ways of seeing the same movement material seems necessary to enable powerful and comprehensive communication through the two-dimensional medium. This particularly applies to movement dynamics. **Effort study** is a large part of drama training following Laban's approach, partly because the Eight Action-Efforts can be applied easily to everyday actions with descriptive terminology. A physical understanding of the many variants made from different combinations (including Incomplete Efforts, States and Drives) offers a systematic analysis of how movement relates to inner intention, which in turn can identify clear character choices available for the actor when physically preparing a role. While it is possible to teach actors this eukinetic part of Laban's approach with reference only to the motion factors of weight, space, time and flow, I have found, in this new two-dimensional format of teaching, that it has been hugely beneficial to connect to the affinities between Effort and Shape as developed by Warren Lamb. Warren considered the fluctuation between degrees of extremity in the movement dynamic spectrum and measured the connections between the effort used and the shape being produced simultaneously.

### A summary of Online-Screen Effort-Shape :

In the two-dimensional screen it is possible to sense the change of weight by noticing how the level of lightness allows the person to visibly rise or sink with force in the shape they make. Motion that is widening on the horizontal plane or narrowing centrally into the body can

suggest how much attention the person is giving to the visible world beyond their screen. Whether decisions are being taken with sudden immediacy or sustained reflection can be revealed visibly with the moves that advance or retreat from the flat-screen ahead.

In a dramatic performance context, occurring within this computer screen medium, non-verbal signals can be attached to words spoken by the character, to create a persona that channels the inner intentions through a combined awareness of effort with shape. Physical **gestures** (with effort content) merge with the **postures** made while the dramatic interaction occurs (affecting body shape). Combining the non-verbal strand with the verbal strand makes movement an art for the actor, which can be particularly evident in individual performance on the screen. Whether this is as a *soliloquy* showing the secret thoughts of the character, or as a *monologue* that has story-telling narrative following a logical argument, the different displays of emotions and personal feelings can be transmitted through the variations in effort-shape material. Dialogues with other characters, or scenes with some characters observing and listening, can also be consolidated. It appears as if the players are in the same scene, even if separated in physical isolation, providing that all performers are aware of their combined contribution to the effort-shape. The listener or supporting character has a choice to connect to the dominant dynamics of the protagonist, as the individual leading the scene, or to respond with varying levels of agreement or dissent, even seemingly hiding their inner secret opinions from others on the screen but allowing them to be viewed by the "audience." In the ZOOM format, the audience is an individual with the option to have full view of all characters at all times.

### Shadow Movements (with thanks to Marion North)

Secret signals may be transmitted as **shadow movements**. Besides the dominant movement modes contributing to the construction of meaning as narrative and character, the screen can be full of other unprescribed motions. These may not be related to the script or direction

Motion Factor	Effort	Shape
<b>Weight</b> Intention Levels (Giving in to Gravitational Force: committing to the moment or letting it release carelessly)	Pressure Decreasing - Increasing	Vertical Plane Rising - Falling
<b>Space</b> Attention Levels (Screen Expansion: directly into the camera or flexibly away into the room)	Focus Decreasing - Increasing	Horizontal Plane Narrowing - Widening
<b>Time</b> Decision Moments (Moving towards or away from the screen: speed of reactions)	Timing Decelerating - Accelerating	Sagittal Plane Retreating - Advancing
<b>Flow</b> Overall Progression	<b>Flow of Effort</b> (Binding or Freeing)	<b>Flow of Shape</b> (Closing or Opening)

*Table of Effort-Shape Affinity*

of the scene, and may be made unconsciously by the performer, as mistakes made by an unfocused actor. They may however be intentionally presented as part of the imagined character portrayed subtly by the actor. In this way, shadow movements can be part of the art of movement.

Indeed, the 2d medium may enlarge the size of such shadow moves, which may normally be hidden in the background. They would be less noticeable in a live theatrical setting where usually the whole body is on view, or may be diminished in a film or television context, where the camera angle would be usually guided by a director's vision. The director has less control in this online format. In the fixed-online screen genre, it is customary for each individual to appear in a frame which is identical in size and having equal status to the number of participants. Because of this, small spontaneous moves are noticeable, potentially revealing the true state of the person engaged with the communication.

Marion North's research from her work as Laban's movement analyst showed how human personality can be observed through these "shadow" movements – fleeting body-language signs that express inner thoughts and feelings. Oftentimes, it appears these **shadow moves** are evidence of a lack of engagement with the dominant issue, and can form a personal movement profile giving another interpretation of the character, exposing the hidden personality of the individual.

I would suggest there is value in learning to observe these shadow movements, and to train all performers to be aware of the power of such moves made by themselves and others. Simple things like the glance of the eyes, uncontrolled twitches of head, neck and shoulders, and gestures of insignificant body parts such as fingers, eyebrows, facial movements around the mouth or forehead, and the changes of gaze to alternating areas in space, are all part of the movement material giving information, and these small moves appear much more prominent on the fixed screen format. Performers may remain in their small boxes, yet each uncontrolled move can distract away from the main performer at any moment. If the performer is being viewed in full-screen and close-up, then each shadow move is even more visible, maybe even magnified, and can be considered as communicating some greater meaning. Actors can train to select such elements to communicate their thoughts physically and to visibly express their inner dialogue. Micro-movements are part of this art.

#### **Creative Challenges for Lockdown Laban!**

I have given a general overview of some of Laban principles from the disciplines of space harmony or *choreutics*, through the study of effort-shape or *eukinetics* connecting to the inner intention, and even to the minutiae of analysis of micro-movements. I now offer some specific examples of how these approaches have helped me in my recent work performing, teaching and choreographing in this newly enforced online medium.

#### **Sunday Brunch TV: Ancient Greek Warrior uses the Laban Defense Scale**

I was asked to teach some online class for the TV show Sunday Brunch – filmed live from Bangkok to London. The TV producers asked for something that would expose the

origins of dance, to look at the basic ideas of dancing, and see if an ancient dance could be taught through the most up to date medium of an online dance class. Knowing the "sporty" reputation of the presenter (Tim Lovejoy) I suggested the ancient Greek warrior "pyrrhic" dance, as the idea of using three-dimensional movement and connecting interactively. I chose to teach the Dimensional Scale – as the spatial grid Laban employed for this movement scale connects to the ancient philosopher Plato. In his *Timaeus*, the Seven Motions are identified in all human movement (Up, Down, Side to Side, Back, Forward and Turn).

Pyrrhic is a battle dance, so the idea of defending your own space became a real issue. I had my own theatrical sword (borrowed from the Thai Opera company) but the presenter had to grab what he could find from his kitchen, and ended up with a spatula. Certainly this demonstrated the need to go beyond your confined space in isolation, and use dance and movement to explore expansively – even thinking of links to the cosmic dimension of the planets!

#### **Shakespeare drama: an Online Brawl between many continents**

I was unable to journey to Russia as planned to stage Shakespeare at MIDAS (the Moscow-based International Drama and Arts Studio). Instead, I worked with director/actress Olga Blagodatskikh, creating online play-readings on ZOOM. While we found ways to make things manageable, by turning off our videos when our character was not in the scene for example, the dance scenes presented a challenge.

When we spoke of the dance scene in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* it was decided that I would become Shakespeare's Dancing Master and lead the whole company in a fairy roundel. The Fairy Queen Titania criticises her King Oberon for refusing to dance in harmony with her circle dancing: "with thy brawls thou hast disturbed our sport" she chides, meaning that Oberon preferred to brawl, that is to fight, rather than dance. However, here Shakespeare is making a dance-pun on the word brawl - as in his day a circle dance was known as a "bransle" – meaning to sway from side to side. Selecting the Washerwomen's Branle from the 1588 French dance manual *Orchesographie* I set out to simply teach the beginning sway from side to side, as I have done many times before. Alas, in this ZOOM format, confusion ensued. The dance soon descended into a brawl in the violent sense of the word, with confusion in the mirroring on the screen, distortion of sound, and inability to synchronise hand gestures with the time delay. The actors were joined in the world-wide-web, linking many continents, and wishing their movement would present perfect world harmony. But no, in reality, all that was produced was onscreen mayhem.

#### **Dramatic Dance: Historical Dance is ZOOM-ed**

As Artistic Director of the UK charity Nonsuch History & Dance, I have been offering online ZOOM classes based on my RADA Book "Dramatic Dance." These sessions have been attended by students of dance, drama, music, history, and costume from all around the world. This textbook links expressive dance ideas with historical research, Laban-based concepts, and finally considers how a particular dance style from a specific time period

can have performance value to an audience watching right now. The onscreen format acted like a sieve, as the dance form we were examining was passed through the ZOOM experience: the essential elements seemed to be caught in the internet net. Interestingly, the remnants remaining were some of the vital elements that linked together the strands of expressivity, cultural studies, movement dynamics, and performance energy.

The 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian dance masters focused on the upper carriage of the body to give grace to the performer's movement style, exemplified partly in the shoulder area – but this had to be created by undulation occurring underneath: even though the feet can't be seen under the flowing dress of the female courtier, the physical sensation is transferred throughout the body by the rise and fall in the stepping (called *ondegiarre* and *aierie* in the treatises). We couldn't see the feet on the screen – but we definitely could tell who wasn't undulating gracefully.

Links to Rudolf Laban became very specific when we started learning the Ballroom Minuet of the Baroque period online. This formal dance is featured in Laban's 1926 *Choreographie*, and demonstrates his understanding of Feuillet-Beauchamp notation and how he chose to use the minuet as an example of the three cardinal planes being attached to different forms of social interaction occurring during the dance. (I must thank one of my PhD supervisors **Jeffrey Longstaff** for introducing me to this research and guiding my practical exploration). The importance of dancing with a partner is so important in this dance form. In isolation-online-lockdown no partners are allowed – so one option was to give this role to another dancer appearing in the screen ahead, however we found a much more appropriate option. By using the fact that your reflection could be also on the screen in front of you, your partner could of course be... yourself! Here the ZOOM format came into its own: by un-clicking the "Mirror My Video" command on the personal settings on the device, your reflection became a partner working in opposition! The Z-pattern could be danced in perfect symmetry. Indeed, without a doubt it was more symmetrical than it ever could have been in reality at the noble court of King Louis XIV, *le Roi se danse*.

A very interesting application of the **three cardinal planes** should also be discussed, as these online explorations have suggested to me an area for further research. When Laban discusses the Free Inclinations in *Choreutics* he



Bangkok Youth Opera, You Are Sixteen: Daniel Nardone & Rhea Ghandi

talks about the radial lines resulting in circles around the three planes we commonly call the Door, Table and Wheel. Radial lines, Laban calls them gestures of adoration, of blessing and of submission, relating to the vertical, horizontal and sagittal shaping can communicate meanings in human interaction (particularly in ritualistic or codified systems of communication). This process of moving from "arrival", to "interaction", to "reverence", found in the ritual of the Ballroom Minuet, complies with this exact sequence. In the ZOOM format, dancers can incline their gestures to these radial lines and show clearly how they are arriving in the **Door of Adoration**, and joining a partner at the **Table of Benediction**. How they curve their bodies while making their bow evidently relates to the **Wheel of Submission**.

As I write this article, I am planning next week's Dramatic Dance ZOOM which will feature the 19<sup>th</sup> century ballroom dances. I am not sure what will result from this challenge as these dances all require the closed-couple ballroom hold. As the partner would be in close contact, we may need to dance actually with our devices ("May I have the pleasure of this dance, my dear iPhone / iPad / Laptop?") I will have to report the success or otherwise of this online relationship after our release from lockdown, when hopefully we can place real partners on our social-distance-dance-cards!

#### **Operatic staging: It's not over until the Online Singer moves**

The Bangkok Youth Opera requested online sessions to complement their vocal coaching, and explore how staging could add to the lyrics and the drama of the songs they were working on before lockdown. We have been able to find different online ways to produce choreographed routines for different musical numbers – and here I return to the first point I made – that as Rudolf Laban himself had to adapt artistically as aesthetic styles changed, so we must each rise to the challenge and find a way to communicate artistically through this online medium that can feel at times confining and restrictive.

Comedy was one way to break the tension of negotiating the ZOOM format where each person would actually be seeing something different on their screen. The two young singers had fun creating online physical slapstick while performing the "Bold Gendarme's Duet" from Offenbach's satirical operetta *Genevieve*. They had to imagine where the other person would be if their screens were next to each other. This gave opportunity for lots of coordination training, and transposing from left to right to be able to give each other a "high five" slap of hands, and attempting to march in time side by side – sometimes the screen seemed to make one singer much taller than the other, adding to the mocking ridicule of the number.

The duet of "You are Sixteen, Going Seventeen" from *The Sound of Music*, required the young lovers to find ways to flirt and act embarrassed, being very aware of how micro-movements could give away their inner most thoughts. The characters wished they were able to physically dance and kiss, but now the computer screen gets in the way (although, I think the two youngsters were secretly quite relieved they weren't physically on stage and didn't have to kiss for real.)

Our finale of “So Long Farewell” from *The Sound of Music* with the company of children, has actually worked really well with each child finding a way to say goodbye and leave their screen in a different choreographic way. The “Leaving the Meeting” command became an artistic moment in this ZOOM musical number!



Bangkok Youth Opera, *So Long, Farewell: the Von Trapp children*

### A Future Vision: Harmonic Interactive Healing

Here is a thought for what could develop from this pandemic experience, offering a more therapeutic benefit, as the harmonic interactive element seems vitally important for the future. This lockdown training is in preparation for when physical interaction is deemed safe once more, and after this isolation I can sense that we will feel immense healing when bodies can unite in shared physical spaces once more. Even with **social distancing**, or **anti-social distancing** as some prefer to call it, there is a way to keep that connectivity by considering the extension of the body into the “**super zones**” – considering with a Laban-lens the choreutic units materialized in performance, in particular through spatial projections. With the emphasis during this pandemic on two-dimensional screen-locking, our social interaction may have been lessened, and potentially physically flattened. The new normal may need some Laban-based harmonic interactive healing, ensuring an increased holistic three-dimensional understanding of real physical body language.

Here in Bangkok, as we ease out of Lockdown, the Grand Opera Thailand is supporting a project called **Voice Wellness** ready for when people can meet physically again. The ideas were developed from a Mind-Body-Spirit seminar held one week before social distancing and isolation were decreed. Dancers hold 2-metre long bamboo canes to give the adequate distance, explore interactive movement around an axis, link linearly, and create geometry in space. The aim is to allow participants to find connections beyond their own kinespheres and produce harmony in space. The exercises are playful, establishing connections in the A & B scales, and other

patterns in rings within the Platonic Solids (tetrahedron, octahedron, cube, and icosahedron). The distance maintained between participants is much greater than in martial arts or partner dance.

Technology is most likely to continue to develop and advance, and in years to come we may not be so frustrated with the two-dimensional online format. I hope that this can go hand in hand with further exploration of the three-dimensional physical world with movement and dance, and further examination of interactive dynamics in drama. Providing, of course, that we make sure we stay healthy and active.

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Brenton Cheng, *Moving Space: The Interactive, 3D Compendium of the Laban Scales*, <https://apps.apple.com/us/app/moving-space-the-laban-scales/id396089751>

were the principles of movement and dance, to which, I believe, I owe my current fully functioning body. My joints are free, my knees are resilient, my energy flows fluidly, and I can galvanize myself to action or calm and centre myself through relaxation. I am truly grateful for the lack of a punishing technique through the training, just for the techniques of travelling, turning, elevating and the rich and diverse study of energy work (Effort), spatial organization and the subtleties of relationship. With these principles in my flesh and bones, I was able to move seamlessly between teaching dance in education, working in the community, with special needs, with art students, with young children, with marginalized teenagers and with the elderly.

For example, I took a workshop for five young people who were making the bridge between living in a Dr. Bernado's

home and adult independence; I called it “Dance with a Difference”. The hardest challenge was to help them overcome inertia and their fears of being seen to do anything silly. My “dance teacher” persona was strongly challenged. I put lots of set sequences of steps together, arm gestures, Jane Fonda keep fit stuff, and had them copy me; it was all simple enough for them to get right, with just enough challenge, and I let them choose the music to go with their flow. With limited attention span we had to change activities frequently. We did endless follow my leader games, all based on the body and its activities - bending, stretching, gesturing - and, as they needed to find out about the space in the vast church hall, travelling with varied steps and jumps. Coming down from this high energy activity, they made statues around each other, one person making a still shape, another joining on and creating a new form, until all were connected. As each changed place from a circle to the growing group shape, they were challenged to find their own new form, and to move infinitely slowly. This was new to them, but they lost their earlier self-consciousness and enjoyed seeing just how slowly they could move. We re-made the circle, lit a candle, and they were invited to give a quality to each other as a gift. One boy said he'd got nothing to give because if he gave it, he wouldn't have it for himself. With prompting he reluctantly gave the quality of sleep to his friends - something he clearly knew about. The group was animated and enjoyed the session.

Another time I worked with a class of 32 seven and eight year olds from a Bradford School. To arouse their interest I used brightly coloured photos in the catalogue of an exhibition by the sculptor Dhruva Mistry showing mythological beasts which were composites of different animals - plenty of imaginative scope here. The children were wildly excited. I found some circus music by Rick Wakeman, and we danced with body parts using lots of energy, rhythmically utilizing the energy that they brought with them, and developed this into partner dances. We danced the dance of the Water Guardian - I told them the guardians “looked after something” and that these mythical beasts guarded all the Air, Fire, Water and Earth, as well as Space – and followed up the dance with mask making: so much vitality and excitement was generated. Some of the comments from follow up letters show how much the children enjoyed the experience: “I liked when we were like birds flying”... “I liked when we were guarding the golden egg”... “I liked the waterfall”... “I was really happy when you put the music on”... “I liked the bit where you had to be a snake and change into a bird”.

Working with special needs adults on a weekly basis, I was able to find ways of working with their various disabilities. Music was always a great stimulus. Kevin, wheelchair bound and with an inability to speak, was hugely enthusiastic, waving his arms, and his bright eyes drinking in the freedom to move whatever he could. I have a picture that he painted in a subsequent art class, framed and hanging on my wall, depicting a bird with wings.

With the elderly, we spent many sessions singing and moving to Max Bygraves' Greatest Hits and the music of Vera Lynn. They did whatever they could from sitting in chairs, bending stretching, twisting, gesturing. We did historical and folk dances in pairs whilst sitting and for those who could, simple step dances in a circle. Always, there would be a shift from inertia to vitality. This is what

free dance is really about; vitality, *joie de vivre*, self-awareness, and the opportunity to dance with others. This possibility for communion with others whilst moving and dancing is an important contribution to the improvement of social skills, for empathic responses much needed in today's world.

Currently I am working with movement in therapeutic settings - I should add that in personal crisis at forty, I embarked on a four year psychotherapy programme (Psychosynthesis), followed by training with Gabrielle Roth in the Dancing Path to the Soul, often known as “Five Rhythms”, and with Stanislav Grof in his Holotropic Breathwork. These rich and diverse strands of knowing through the body are part of the knowledge that informs my current work. I teach two aspects for therapists, the first to get them out of their heads and into their bodies, and secondly, to give them some basic skills of working with the body in therapy, covering, for example, the principles of observation, grounding and empathic response, using Laban's four pillars of Body, Effort, Space and Relationship.

One of the major pieces of work I am engaged in is co-leading a six day therapeutic programme (The Penninghame Process), in Scotland, where people come to relieve themselves of stress and to look towards leading more happy and fruitful lives. There is a large body component to this course, which includes breath work and dance to free the body of its limitations, blocked energy, and to open up to the sheer joy of moving.

Currently there is much literature around the findings of the benefits of working through the body, such as *Excellence in Teaching and Learning: The Quantum Learning Series* by Barbara K Given and Bobbi de Porter (London: Learning Forum Publications, 2015), a book which extols the virtues of learning through movement based activities. When I look at the youth of today, I am stirred by a deep yearning for the regeneration of movement, dance and the arts in schools as central to the curriculum, so children can not only grow healthy minds and bodies, but they will know themselves for who they truly and deeply are, rather than being products of a mind driven system caught up in competitiveness, or locked away in some virtual world.

## Laban's Principles: backbone of a life

Rosie Manton

I was born in West Yorkshire in 1944. Growing up, I was lucky that Alec Clegg was Chief Education Officer for the West Riding of Yorkshire as he enthusiastically supported Laban's work in schools. Thus, I had free movement throughout my junior school and more surprisingly at the Girls Grammar school too. By dint of great fortune I landed at the Art of Movement Studio, in 1963, for the 2+1 training for teachers in the Art of Movement under the wise tutelage of Lisa Ullmann. Laban had died in 1958 so I missed him by a few years. The first two years of study were at the Studio and the final year at Trent Park Training College: I could say these were the happiest years of my life.

I taught for a year in the East End of London, after which I was invited back to the Studio as a junior lecturer, where I stayed for seven years. Thus, imprinted in my being

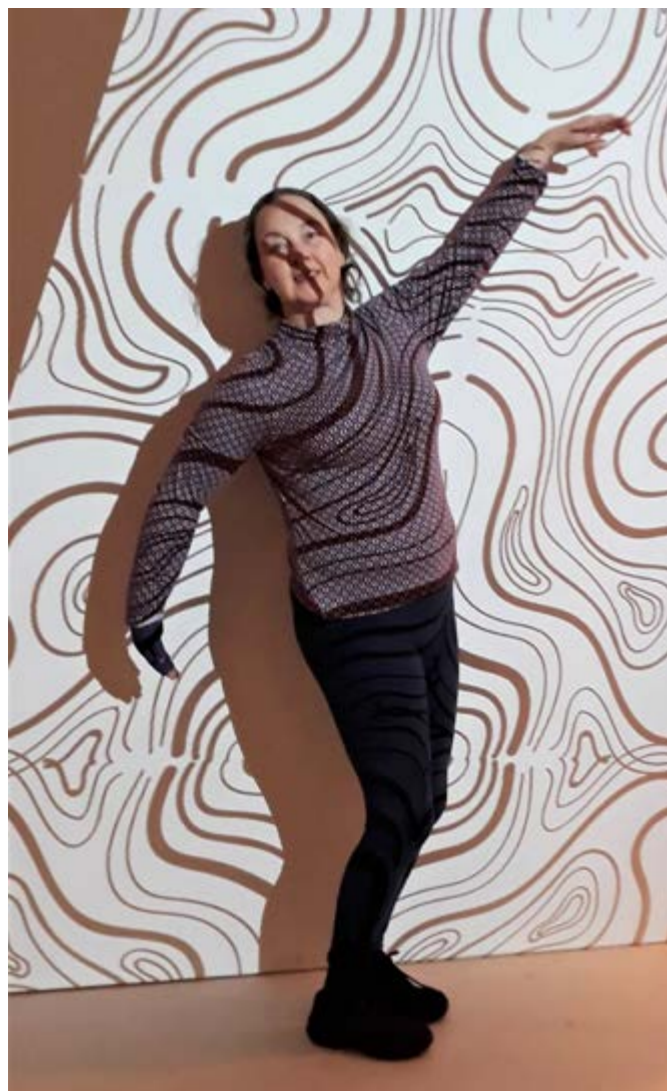
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## Dance as Art

Lynnette Gladding

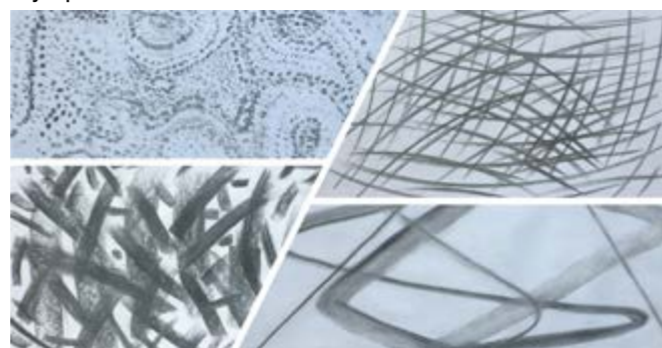


had leukaemia. When I had completed several courses of chemotherapy and regained my strength, my eagerness to return to dancing pulled me through difficult times.

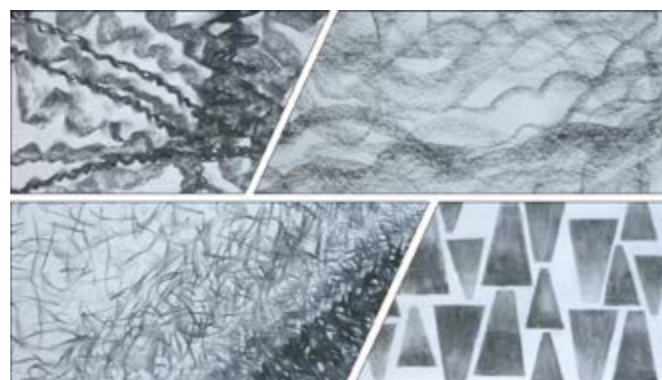
I auditioned for Marion North at The Laban Centre, at Goldsmith's University, New Cross. With a scholarship from the Malcolm Sargent Fund, I began the next stage of my creative development. We were taught the history of dance; Labanotation; ballet with Laverne Meyer; choreography; and Graham and Cunningham techniques - my first experience of learning contemporary dance. It was a fresh, new exciting way to work. Visits were organised for us to see numerous companies during *Dance Umbrella* and we also saw a Tom Merrifield exhibition. He had been a professional ballet dancer who became a sculptor, capturing the image of dancers with whom he had worked as if they were in motion.

The years have passed, and I have performed and taught many different dance styles. Nine years ago, I trained to become a qualified ballet teacher, becoming an Associate of the International Dance Teachers Association. At this time, I had just commenced my undergraduate studies in Fine Art at Canterbury Christ Church University, eventually graduating with a first-class degree in 2017.

For my Master's Project, I started by re-visiting *Laban for All* by Jean Newlove and John Dalby. Then I experimented with mark-making using Laban's 'eight basic movement efforts', initially using charcoal as a medium, partly because of its adaptability, and partly owing to a belief that being monochrome I could assess if my work captured movement. It would prevent my colour choices (that might lend themselves towards certain 'efforts') from influencing my opinion of the outcome.



*dabbing, slashing, thrusting, gliding*



*wringing, floating, flicking, pressing*

As a member of the Laban Guild, I was pleased to notice in the Autumn 2019 magazine a request from the Editor asking for members to report on their recent Laban-related practice. I am an artist currently studying for my Master's Degree in Fine Art at the Norwich University of the Arts. For my final project I have chosen to make abstract paintings inspired by dance. I remembered my time studying at the Laban Centre, and how Rudolf Laban began his artistic life as a painter - he had been inspired by movement to become a dancer, choreographer and movement theorist. I asked myself if I could use his theories to make paintings of dance movement.

Why is my focus capturing dance movement in my paintings? Throughout my life my love of dance and my love of art have always been with me. Since an early age I have been passionate about dance. At thirteen, following a successful ballet audition with Eve Pettinger for a Kent County Council grant, I was accepted to study at The Arts Educational School, London. I learnt a lot about technique, a dancer's discipline and professionalism. At sixteen I was struggling in class with low energy levels and reluctantly decided to conclude my dance studies. Intending to follow a career in set and costume design. I accepted the offer of a place on a foundation degree in Art at Whitechapel College. During the summer holidays, I was admitted to hospital where I discovered the reason for my lethargy - I

My drawings of Laban's 'efforts' intrigued my tutors and peers who had little knowledge of his theories. This positive encouragement gave me resolve to explore deeper into this side of my experimentation. Having proved to myself that I could produce work based on his 'eight basic movement efforts' in monochrome, I started to explore these again using a colour palette. I considered the qualities of space, time, and weight, and physically performed the movements while using various mediums to see what I could achieve. I am keen to try different methods, tools and especially different media to explore how they capture the dynamics of movement.

*Flicking* (acrylic, 75cm square on ply-board). I enjoyed the contact with the paint on my fingers, it was like exploring paint for the first time as a child.



*Dabbing* (acrylic, 40cm square on ply-board). I imagined a dancer coming on *sur les pointe*; she *courus* from up stage left to right, then travels diagonally downstage to centre and makes sweeping swirls before coming downstage further, then *courus* off, downstage right.



So, I am using my knowledge as a dancer to help me use Laban's theories in painting dance. My work is developing, as I am starting to use a combination of the 'efforts' in my paintings. I am working towards fusing these abstract images with my figurative sketches, which were made observing classes and production rehearsals, most recently of Richard Alston Dance Company's preparing for a performance of *Final Edition* (which was a wonderful experience). I needed to have a photographic memory and then make my marks quickly or else they would be lost. I soon realised my training as a dancer, in which I learned a routine by description of the steps and observation, had helped me in that I was able to keep the memory of what they had rehearsed in my mind's eye, then reproduce it on paper.

Owing to Covid-19, University has been put on hold and hopefully lectures will re-commence in September. Thankfully, I have a studio in my garden, where I am able to escape and continue to generate work. I am thinking about creating a Laban movement inspired painting performance piece. I would also like to make a stop motion animation that adds a further dimension and a different kind of movement to my work.

I am due to graduate at the end of the year. My future plans are to continue working and developing as an artist. Laban's research was a life-long study, I should like to learn more about his theories and recent developments to inform my work. I shall do this by attending lectures and participating in classes. It is also my intention to study and qualify to teach movement as part of the Keep Fit Association, where I may share my enthusiasm for dance.

## Members' Classes

**Due to Covid 19 physical classes are not possible. Contact the members below as they may be offering video classes.**

### **Adult Movement and Dance in Belfast**

Contact: **Brenda McKee**

Email: [brendamckee@btinternet.com](mailto: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](mailto:jennyfrankel.laban@gmail.com)

