

# *Movement, Dance & Drama*





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## Editorial

How exciting it must have been for Darren Royston and Alison Curtis-Jones to be part of the opening event at the 22+100: LABAN AND THE MODERNIST PROJECT in Brazil, a few weeks ago, with a whole community of practitioners and academics coming together to explore Laban's work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Reports of their contributions are included here as is how to access the film of Valerie Preston Dunlop's keynote address given at the opening of the conference.

Also in this edition, we pay tribute to one of Laban Guild International's true servants, Ann Ward. Several people have written with fond memories of her superb organisational skills and admiration of her inspiring teaching; she will be greatly missed by many.

Do please get in touch if you would like to share your thinking, practice or experience of Laban's work, if you would like to write a review of a relevant book or performance, or to tell us what is happening in your dance community. I look forward to hearing from you.

## 2002 - 2022: 20 years of LABAN Conferences in Rio de Janeiro

*Regina Miranda, MSc., CMA*

In 2001, a movement researcher from São Paulo who had organized a few local Laban meetings, asked me to take the lead in convening larger conferences. I accepted the challenge and, since then, I have planned and coordinated four Laban Conferences in Rio, alternating with an equal number of conferences abroad. The Rio events were possible through the work of core members of the Regina Miranda & ActorsDancers Company (Ana Bevílaqua, Adriana Bonfatti, and Marina Salomon), the collaboration of artists and researchers who presented, and the invaluable partnership of educational institutions (such as the Dance School Angel Vianna (FAV), Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), University of Rio (UNIRIO) and Arts House of Laranjeiras (CAL)) and of cultural institutions (such as Rio de Janeiro Museum of Modern Art (MAM RJ), Parque Lage – School of Visual Arts (EAV Parque Lage), Choreographic Center of the City of Rio de Janeiro (CCO) and Casa França-Brasil, Cultural Centre (CFB)). All the conferences have been inclusive of the various lines of thought that traverse and enrich the Laban field and in addition to participants from Brazilian Laban-informed organizations, we have welcomed international presenters from LIMS, DNB, LABAN, IMS, EUROLAB, DEL, and independent artists and researchers.

## Trustees Report July 2022

The Trustees are pleased to announce that Sara Houston has agreed to join LGI as a trustee. More information about Sara is on the website.

As reported in the last magazine the Trustees have overseen the refurbishment of Rudolf Laban's and Lisa Ullmann's grave in Weybridge. A very small gathering was held there on his birthday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, to acknowledge this. It has been proposed that this becomes an annual event.

The Trustees are keen to support applications for funding for activities which promote Laban's work. As you will see in the magazine two academic-practitioners were supported to attend the Conferência Laban 2022, in Rio de Janeiro. A report on the Acting Methods Reconsidered Conference in Marathon, Greece will be in the next magazine. Information on how to apply for funding is on the website.

The Trustees meet regularly by Zoom: if you have any questions for them, please use the Trustees email address [trustees@labanguildinternational.org.uk](mailto:trustees@labanguildinternational.org.uk)

The first meeting took place at the MAM RJ, August 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> 2002. ENCONTRO LABAN 2002 - The Language of the Body: Developments and Applications of Laban and Bartenieff Movement Theories invited participants to discuss the importance of thinking in movement terms and in the fundamental function of movement in education, performing arts, and communication. The conference addressed educational issues, such as how preconceived ideas about the body could hinder artistic development and inhibit the achievement of unique performances, and more specifically, how the Laban work could be more attentive to structural and often unconscious racial and ethnic issues that exclude people and prevent desirable futures.

In 2003, we started in Rio the "Choreographic Atelier", an annual educational program that offered free and rigorous professional training in performing arts to groups of 100 selected participants, encompassing different generations and social classes, from the *favelas* to the richest neighborhoods of the city. From 2003 to 2009, the program changed the face of contemporary dance in the city.

The LABAN 2008 Conference: Performing Arts & New Territories was held at the Choreographic Center of Rio de Janeiro, from August 1st – 3rd, 2008, as part of the Global Laban Celebration, which included gatherings in New York (US), London, and Dartington (UK). This event reflected on issues involving cultural exchange policies, expansion of the relationships among movement professionals, and the establishment of fruitful partnerships between participating institutions that, collaboratively, sought commitments to multicultural actions. In the welcoming speech, I pointed out that when Laban organizations “are effective in seeking dialogue and sharing their accumulated knowledge, the LABAN map extends, cross fertilization happens and new forms of knowledge are produced, which then nurture all institutions and maintain Laban’s theories relevant today.”

The years after the 2008 conference were dedicated to the design and implementation of the Diploma in Laban/Bartenieff System, a two-year graduate level program promoted by LABAN Rio in partnership with LIMS and held in Rio at the FAV. The Program started in 2010, attracting professionals from most Brazilian states, and remains active to the present.

Inspired by Paulo Freire’s “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” and Michel Foucault’s vision of a “society of freedom”, the Laban 2018 Conference proposed the “Laban System as a Practice of Freedom”. Although understood as a positive principle, freedom is seldom perceived as a practice, which needs to be exercised and nurtured in all fields. We proposed and discussed how Laban embodied knowledge presents itself as unique educational territory for creative processes, capable of producing singularities, collective responsibility, and freedom of expression, therefore creating a platform for social mobility. The conference theme extended our audience beyond its usual boundaries; in addition to the performing arts, we were excited by the interest of Social and Cultural Studies, Architecture, Somatic Therapies, and more.

Laban 2022 – Rio: 22+100: Laban and the Modernist Project, co-chaired by Dr. Ligia Tourinho and myself, took place at the CFB, June 22nd - 25th, 2022, and invited artists-researchers to reflect on the relationship between Modernism and Laban’s movement principles.

The theme made a reference to the Brazilian “Modern Art Week”, a radical cultural festival that took place in 1922, as perceived 100 years

later. “The Week” intended to discuss and combat expressions and visions of art considered conservative, to break with the prevailing aesthetic standards and to renew the artistic and cultural environment through the construction of a national artistic identity that could dialogue with the European avant-gardes. In its search for a national identity visible in the new Brazilian artistic works, the modernist discourse proved to be an important tool to overcome the intellectual monopoly of European elites and of the local elites that mirrored them.

While some of the Brazilian modernist parameters were culturally specific, others, such as breaking with traditional patterns, the fight for the freedom of artistic expression, political and social thoughts expressed publicly in artwork and the emergence of women leaders in arts and politics, were common to artistic movement in other countries. In Europe, imbued by a certain modernistic enchantment with reason, clarity, autonomy, and individual singularity, Rudolf Laban was creating his complex body of work, rebelling against dance’s traditional formalism, and seeking to inspire audiences and performers alike to become aware of the tensions between inner and outer realities, as embodied in dance. 100 years later, we wondered what role a Laban-infused dance, poetry, performance, and/or discourse could play in shaping the appreciation of contemporary arts’ cultural diversity and in promoting equality and inclusion in the field and beyond. I shared some thoughts in my opening speech:

If conceptualization, as a creative philosophical activity, can be considered an essential practice in the Laban field, I believe it is more potent to move away from traditional certainties and exercise a critical and embodied appreciation of the multiplicity of Labanian discourses that exist nowadays, with the variations that each one of them introduce, the possibilities of establishing new connections and the excitement of creative emergencies. In this sense, we are here today, continuing, actualizing, and expanding Laban’s foundational theories.

Editor’s note: We hope to cover more about Laban’s work in Brazil in the coming editions of the magazine. In the meantime, readers might be interested in the doctoral thesis of Melina Scialom *Rudolf Laban in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: a Brazilian Perspective* (2015), available at <https://pure.roehampton.ac.uk/portal/en/studentTheses/rudolf-laban-in-the-21st-century-a-brazilian-perspective>



## ***Re-imagining Laban: Dynamic Transformations in Contemporary Dance Practice,***

### **a paper given at 22+100: LABAN AND THE MODERNIST PROJECT**

*Dr Alison Curtis-Jones*

This paper focuses on my creative practice of re-imagining “lost” dance works by modern dance pioneer, Rudolf Laban (1879-1958), and the re-staging of my choreographed work *Drumstick* (2015), a re-imagining of Laban’s *Dancing Drumstick* (1913), performed by my company Summit Dance Theatre, in Monte Verita, Switzerland in 2015.

My work explores contemporary developments of Rudolf Laban’s praxis for dance, known as Choreological Studies, first established by Valerie Preston-Dunlop, which investigates the complexities of human movement in all its forms and specifically in relation to artistic practice. I teach across all programmes at Trinity Laban Conservatoire, London and I am Programme Leader of The Specialist Diploma Choreological Studies (SDCS). This work attracts international artists and movement practitioners who wish to understand human movement through a choreological lens. As dance artist and pedagogue my work contributes to furthering this field of movement analysis and creative exploration, through interrogation of Rudolf Laban’s theories and principles of human movement to explore ways of creating, performing and perceiving movement and dance. The intention is not to preserve Laban’s theories as they were but to move the work forward with relevance for today’s artistic practices.

This choreological approach identifies visible structures of movement, provides a terminology for naming, describing and interpreting what we do and see in movement. It provides a framework for investigating the process of deliberate movement choices in relation to intention and what dancers and dance-makers choose to make visible to

## **Keynote Address**

### ***Dr Valerie Preston Dunlop***

This address was given in the form of a video and included three films: *Ekstatische*, *Krystall* and *Marotte*.

The link for the video is <https://vimeo.com/712769744>  
The video is password protected; if you would like to view it please contact [secretary@labanguildinternational.org.uk](mailto:secretary@labanguildinternational.org.uk)

## **A summary of**

the observer. This approach is applicable to other disciplines such as acting, directing, film making, architecture, and any form of movement practice such as yoga, physiotherapy. My work also extends to digital technology, dance science, health and wellbeing.

The key components of choreological practice include principles of the body, action, dynamics, space and relationships, which are inextricably linked. This methodology identifies the dynamics and effort of movement, that is, the expressive, perceptual qualities of movement which are felt and sensed as well as observed. This choreological approach enables investigation of how contemporary developments of Laban’s theories and their application to and integration with practice, can provide a tool not only for choreography, but for supporting effective execution of dance performance in the observation of human movement and direction of dance performance.

In furthering this field, I have used contemporary developments of Laban’s praxis to examine micro-structures of movement, but also the macro structure of choreographic work by looking retrospectively at Laban’s “lost” choreographic works, from 1913-1928, which include *Dancing Drumstick* (1913), *Ishtar’s Journey into Haydes* (1913), *Die Nacht* (1927), and *Green Clowns* (1928). I have drawn from Laban’s later theories to interpret the limited material remains of Laban’s choreographed works, therefore visiting archives to gather sources of information and examining them retrospectively through a contemporary choreological lens. This creative process of interpretation of limited material remains, results not in an exact replica

of Laban's "lost" works (which is impossible), but a re-imagining of the works through creative choreological practice with contemporary dancers for current audiences (see Curtis-Jones 2017, 2019).

I refer to Laban's work as "lost" because there is limited archival evidence and no film footage available, particularly in relation to Laban's *Dancing Drumstick*, and many were created before his notation system was published in 1928. My choreographic process is called "re-imagining" because of the lack of material remains and the degree of creative interpretation required to create a work relating to Laban's original ideas which include "*the rhythm of the body made audible*" (1975, 53). Without seeing Laban's original *Dancing Drumstick*, detective work begins with searching and uncovering documentary evidence, mostly from Laban's own writings and by visiting dance archives. While these tangible documents may reveal certain things and may be seen as permanent, or as a way to preserve, materiality and documentary evidence are nothing in isolation. Engagement with, and interpretation of, the limited material remains allow me to fill archival gaps, to animate archives, by transferring my interpretation of two-dimensional tangible documents, such as letters or photographs, into three-dimensional living archives, activated through the dancers' bodies in rehearsal and performance.

My re-imagining does not claim to replicate Laban's work exactly, therefore contributes to current debates in dance around the differences between re-enactment, reconstruction and recreation. (Lepecki 2010, Main 2017, Barba 2017, Jones 2017, Llopis 2017, Wookey 2017, Pakes 2010, 2020, Franko 2017). I propose questions around the intention and processes of these 're' categories. A reconstruction suggests a more likely representation of the original, which is informed either by film, notated scores, or learnt from direct contact with dancers and/or the director or choreographer of the work itself. There is usually evidence of the work in performance, a commitment to replicate it and authorship is attributed to the original creator. Re-enactment perhaps attempts to evoke the same type of work from the past, aligning as closely as possible to what went before. Recreation implies a more creative approach to existing material remains with attention to the original creator's work, whereas re-imagining is a process which acknowledges the use of contemporary contexts and training practices, does not attempt to replicate the work, but draws from and refers to the choreographer's

original ideas, and is devised using the current artist's practice and choreographic approach.

My research proposes that Laban's experiments with rhythm are evident in his early choreographic work *Dancing Drumstick*. I suggest Laban acts as a choreographic philosopher, questioning the rhythmic dynamic body through his creative work. Laban removes the reliance of dance on music to question if dance can be autonomous and exist as an independent art in its own right. Laban moves away from Emile Jaques Dalcroze's method of movement responding to music, thereby raising the significance of bodily experience and aligning with Laban's suggestion that rhythm is not only an objective counting of beats and measures, but an experiential, sensory, corporeal condition/ event. This is essential in my re-imagined work and is explored in *Drumstick* by not using counts, with dancers relying instead on group cohesion and sensory kinaesthetic listening to perform movement in unison.

I have devised a technical base to prepare dancers for challenging rhythmic phrasing. Embodiment of dynamic extremes and their variations, challenges dancers to broaden their dynamic range and understand the efficiency of movement according to dynamic harmonic laws and natural affinities. Through this training, dancers become aware of their habitual preferences dynamically and can choose to adhere to or go against their affinities to extend qualitative nuance. In my work, dancers' experiment with varying amounts of force, degrees of tension and release, acceleration and deceleration, rupturing affinities and creating inorganic movement choices. Embodying *Drumstick* provides dancers with insight into the possibilities of the dynamic spectrum because they are exposed to the polarities and continuum of Laban's Effort theory and variations of rhythmic phrasing through arbitrary and metric rhythmic patterns and differing degrees of tension, release, weight, and force. Dancers refrain from working in front of a mirror so that the sensation of dynamic changes can be felt and recognised. My research, therefore, evolves Laban's original work by going beyond identifying and embodying the Effort Actions and uses the framework to challenge dancers' dynamic movement possibilities in training and creative contexts.

Because of the focus of dynamics in *Drumstick* and my intentional use of dynamic terminology throughout rehearsals, I argue dancers' dynamic palette is developed by moving them away from their habitual dynamic patterning by challenging them to consciously control



*Drumstick* re-imagined by Alison Curtis-Jones. Summit Dance Theatre in rehearsal 2015. Photo by Alison Curtis-Jones



*Ishtar's Journey into Hades* (2015). Summit Dance Theatre. Re-imagined by Alison Curtis-Jones. Photograph: © Alison Curtis Jones, 2015



*Die Nacht* and *Green Clowns* Photos by Kyle Stephenson



dynamic nuance in performance. My method of contemporary dynamic dance training provides dancers with a different challenge to their Release-based training, as the emphasis is on embodying dynamics and rhythm, particularly strength, and challenges continuous free-flow by disrupting organic patterns of movement and use of weight in relation to gravity, and rupturing what Laban refers to as "choreological order" (1966, viii) by challenging dynamic affinities through sequential and simultaneous movement phrases.

As I have re-staged my re-imagined works many times, I recognise that re-staging is also a creative practice, and that re-staging previously reconstructed, or re-imagined works may also differ in their processes and outcomes (see Main 2012; Pakes 2017; Barba 2011; Franko 1993, 2011, 2017, Lepecki 2007, 2010; Schneider 2001; Preston-Dunlop and Sayers 2011, Edward 2018, Curtis-Jones 2017, 2019). A re-staged reconstruction will endeavour to remain as close to the original as possible, whereas, in my practice, restaging re-imagined works allows for the work to evolve, influenced by current social and cultural contexts and dancers I work with.

When re-staging *Drumstick*, I am not only concerned with movement dynamics but also how *Drumstick* is passed on, transmitted and taught for re-staging. Because *Drumstick* is devised specifically to explore the dynamic, rhythmic body, the processes used to choreograph the work draw from Laban's Effort and rhythmic theories. In my contemporary practice, I rupture some of those principles by going against dynamic affinities. Dancers are therefore prepared and trained to embody this required dynamic palette, to equip them to execute the movement and perform *Drumstick*. It is important to state *Drumstick* also has rigorous, deliberate relationships to space, choreographed with reference to Laban's theories of choreutics and space harmony, using specific spatial planes, orientation, locations of Laban's A Scale, use of decentralisation and harmonic opposition. Emphasis in rehearsal with dancers is clearly on dynamics and it is the embodiment of dynamics, the reciprocal relationship between dancer and musician and subsequently the dancers' re-call of the rhythm, effort and dynamics that I focus on for re-staging.

Through re-staging I discovered how much dynamic data dancers can remember and that dancers' recall processes are intriguing, thus the question of how the body functions as an archive has formed the basis of my research going forward. I argue that restaging is a process of transformation resulting in a new form which

is further complicated by the dynamic flux of the body. I question the validity of the body as archive, and what a dancer's body as archive means in terms of memory store, the body as locus of knowledge and for transmission of embodied knowledge. I refer to Andre Lepecki's use of the term "body as archive" (2010) as a metaphor to investigate the definition of archive and how it can be applied to the body. This in turn requires discussion of how the term "body" is used and understood in dance discourse, as well as how dancers can encode and remember previously taught movement dynamics as part of their practice. I am interested in how my work can be taught to and remembered by new dancers, and the transmission process between dancers, and between dancer and choreographer/director. *Drumstick* is dynamically rich and complex, drawing as it does from Laban theories and contemporary choreological practice which deeply inform my choreographic research, and because of its dynamic richness, re-staging *Drumstick* tests if and how the body can archive dynamic information.

To examine the dancers' ability to remember the movement dynamics for restaging *Drumstick*, I identify how the movement dynamics are learnt through processes of encoding, enhanced by my teaching of movement dynamics. This relies on specific terminology from theories of effort and rhythm, (Laban and Lawrence 1947, Laban 1966), combined with my use of language and "verbal markers" as choreographer and re-staging director. I argue this use of choreological language and terminology provides clarity for dancers and for me as director when referring to movement dynamics in rehearsal and provides a trigger for recall when re-staging. In addition, I identify strategies dancers use to remember movement dynamics and I provide evidence for attention to be given to the way a work is taught to enhance the encoding and recall of movement.

Identifying dynamic movement language allows dancers and directors to benefit from common terminology, which is universally understood in rehearsal, however I acknowledge and debate the complexities of documenting felt sensation and the dichotomy of what is perceived visibly when identifying movement, and the difficulties of language to adequately capture dynamic nuance. The arguments I put forward are qualitative, drawn from observations and experiences in rehearsals and my practice as a dance artist, movement researcher, pedagogue and informed by critical engagement with relevant literature from the dance field as well as psychology and neuroscience. (See Pallasmaa 2012; Adams 2010; Chemero 2009; Shapiro 2011, Haraway in Spatz 2015).

I question the validity of the body as archive, pointing specifically to biological and cognitive decline as a

result of ageing, and other factors that challenge the body-as-archive idea, such as the selective nature of memory; interference of other movement systems such as choreographic practices, training regimes and influences of newly acquired knowledge through training. I refer to Linda Caruso Haviland's claim that "the body serves as a prosthesis for memory, able to assure the possibility of memorisation, or repetition, of reproduction, or of re-impression." (2018, 5), and Haviland's term "the sentient archive" (ibid, 1), to investigate embodied cognition, with "the body as site of consciousness and cognition" (ibid), where prior experience is retrievable "but never as static facts; every action is called up through bodies that are dynamic and ever changing" (ibid) to argue my view that re-staging is a transformative creative practice, and the body is a site for constant transformation and, is itself, in dynamic flux.

There is evidence of a shift to digital archiving, which could suggest less reliance on the body to remember. The advantages of immediacy mean there is more reliance on film and smartphones with mass saturation of quantity and availability of images. Today, using smartphone cameras to capture movement data are used almost as a prosthetic, however, the body is still vital in the role of recall and embodied practice, but, it has to be said, not without limitations. I propose that Andre Lepecki's term "body as archive" (2010) as a metaphor is helpful and that the body is an archive albeit a consistently transformational one. I refer to Lepecki and Michael Foucault's definition of "archive" as a general system of transformations via the activation of the body as an endlessly transformational archive (2010, 34), and Haviland's view of the archives contents and meaning are only understood in retrospect (2018, 5), suggesting that retrieving from an archive to re-enact, or in my case, to re-imagine, then to re-stage for future performances, produces subtle transformations through refinement of the movement by both director and dancers. This is evident when retrieving and clarifying the movement for re-staging, resulting in "inscribing", which I translate to mean that directors and dancers are writing with and through the body, making new marks through clarifying and consequently "irrevocably changing [the work]" (ibid).

I argue that like personal interpretations of archived choreographed works which happen when encountering archival material remains and documentary evidence, the body as archive literally shifts because of dancers' transformations over time. The sensory data residing in the body archive can only be made visible by the dancer as carrier of the data, and their individual interpretations of felt sensation in the present. This, coupled with the director's amendments of movement memories, results in dynamic transformations, with the dancer's body archive consistently updating and refreshing

through its very existence. *Drumstick* therefore and any future re-staging(s) mean the work continues to evolve ... as does my practice and use of Laban's principles.

So, to conclude, for Laban's work to have relevance for contemporary audiences, for the work to resonate with current training practices, the work must move forward to engage with interdisciplinary practices, the demands of the industry, the racing pace of technology... dynamic transformations are the way forward.

*Alison Curtis-Jones, MPhil, is an acclaimed dance artist and movement consultant; a dynamic practitioner and pioneer of contemporary developments of Laban's principles and practice, contemporary choreological studies and movement for wellbeing; expert in creative pedagogy, performance enhancement, movement directing, choreography, contemporary technique and choreological practice. She has taught in Croatia, South Korea, Japan, Beijing, China, Singapore and Switzerland, and presented conference papers and practical research internationally. She has published in Routledge, Palgrave Macmillan, and the Journal of Dance & Somatic Practices. Her work on Green Clowns with Transitions Dance Company, was performed in Canada, Switzerland and the UK, was filmed and screened by Swiss TV, German ARTE TV and featured in the BBC documentary Dance Rebels. She writes, I would like to thank Regina Miranda and Ligia Tourinho for inviting me to Brazil. I would also like to thank Laban Guild International and Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance for sponsoring my visit. Both organisations recognise the value of this 2022 Laban International Conference and I thank them for recognising my work in this field.*

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# Facing Fear in a New World

## 22+100 LABAN AND THE MODERNIST PROJECT, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 22-25 June 2022

Darren Royston

This was my first time in Brazil. I was not alone however, as I shared the trip with Alison Curtis-Jones. We had planned the practicalities of travel and accommodation when we met some weeks before at TRINITY LABAN in London for the memorial to Mirella Bartrip. Attendance at an international conference would be a chance to meet people working in other areas of the world, who would be gathering to consider the historical context of Rudolf Laban in the modernist period of a century past and to see, experience and engage with current practitioners who continued to be inspired by Laban's ideas and who were producing their own artistic, creative and pedagogic work.

Having had a few hours to see some of the amazing sights of the city - a mix of Brazilian culture, history, and natural phenomena - we journeyed to the conference venue in the centre of Rio de Janeiro where the large posters of 22+100 LABAN welcomed us. It was an historic building which dated from the 1820s that had many functions, once even as the jail of the city. Walking up the old worn stone steps, we could see through the imposing wrought iron bars performers preparing in all areas of the space, not as captives waiting to be freed but waiting for the gates to open to let the audience in. This was the evening opening ceremony - ECOPoETIC - a collection of many different performance events, all occurring simultaneously: some solos, some duos and some small groups with different costumes, different music, different languages, celebrating multi-cultural interaction. There were no explanations or introductions at this moment, instead the audience was innocently immersed in each style of art as they got closer to each act, and each viewer was invited to promenade around or stand to observe for as long or as little as they wished. Now began my own task to consider what meaning I could find, using my previous knowledge of ideas connected to Rudolf Laban. At first, this felt a little like being in a museum filled of dancing artefacts, but rather than a display of history it suddenly came alive as an exhibition of new movement material, created to break against tradition and to provoke discussion. This first evening culminated with a further invasion when performers on bicycles arrived in the centre of the space, and while pedalling they played live music from

instruments constructed from various pipes, tubes and unusual percussion. This was a celebration of both difference and familiarity with some music we recognised (such as Ravel's ever-repeating *Bolero* of 1928) yet performed in this new 2022 "modernist" way.

The next morning, the rationale behind this concept of modernism started to be given words, with opening speeches by organisers (Regina Miranda and Ligia Tourinho) and national politicians who talked about the importance of artists coming together to share their experiences at the Modern Arts Week in Brazil a century before. By doing so, artists could attempt to put forward positive ways to deal with the fears of modern life, as the artists gathered in Brazil in 1922 had done. Thinking globally, how had Rudolf Laban reacted in these modern times? What were the traditions that needed to change? What were the new ways of creating an art of movement that were being explored? And furthermore, now, in 2022, what has become traditional and what can movement artists explore again in new ways?

The conference had an immense variety of events occurring and over-lapping in three rooms during the four days including presentations, workshops, film recordings. There were many ways to engage, from listening to lectures (with superb simultaneous translation on headphones), to gathering in smaller groups for discussion, from participating as a performer in workshops to watching from the sides. The aim was to be open and to allow a flow between the different specialist zones. A network of practitioners working in many different disciplines was established, alongside academics working internationally.

The event addressed many issues including well-being and recovery (Juliet Chambers-Coe), ways of creating choreographies linked to personal stories (Emily Berry), the future of notation (Guilherme Hinz and Thaisa Santos), different methods of teaching with contemporary dance techniques (Bala Saravati), professional practice and policy (Fredrick Curry), and even considering how working with horses could teach us about Physical Listening (JoAnna Mendl Shaw). Representing the Laban Guild International, I encouraged practitioners and academics to keep

connected, learning where these ideas came from and to share new discoveries as we move forward into the future. The organisers plan to produce a report of the proceedings and I also hope that some of the work from participants will be featured in this magazine in the future. Full details of all the many participants and presentations and workshops are listed on the website:

<https://www.conferencialabanrio.com/en>

As a direct link to Rudolf Laban, the central keynote address was given by Valerie Preston-Dunlop, broadcast in the main room, "The Nave", as a film recording made specially for the event. By making reference to the artistic context of modernism in art and music, her address gave personal stories of how Laban had encouraged new approaches for movement study and dance to be creatively explored by taking ideas into practice. Practice also implied that things had to be repeated and done again, until a real physical response could be felt in the body. We were reminded to always question what we could learn from each task undertaken and at each moment in history, both on our personal journey and as a community. Within this filmed address were also reimagined examples of Laban's 1924 Kammertanz choreographies (revived as Suite '24). This was a direct connection to Ali Curtis Jones and her reimagining project of Laban's Drumstick choreography, which students were given a chance to sample in a totally dynamic dance workshop the following day.

My workshop directly followed the keynote address, which allowed me to acknowledge the teachers who had introduced me to many different aspects of Rudolf Laban's work, both in choreological studies and in movement for actors. The call for papers for this conference had focused me on the modernist verse drama being performed in England in the early twentieth century, and to consider how text could be used to create movement. Having previously worked as movement director on T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, I had selected a section - the opening chorus of the women of Canterbury who gather at the doors of the cathedral, expressing their fears for what might happen when the Archbishop Thomas Becket returns - to explore physically using a Laban approach. This was a particularly apt scene, considering that "fear" had been introduced with the theme of the conference and now, as I stood ready to begin my workshop, I saw through the railings, that we looked directly onto the old cathedral of Rio: the scene and theme were already synchronised.

Synchronicity! Time as a factor of motion was a concept I proposed as being sensed different in the modernist period. The way we used to travel changed radically in the early twentieth century with the use of the motor car and other mechanical ways of moving, enabling the speed at which we travelled to be increased. Although Laban had not arrived in England by 1935, when Eliot's play was first performed, Eliot did profess an interest in the links between poetry and dance. In 1922, the German philosopher Edmund Husserl was giving lectures in London about phenomenology, offering an alternative way to consider the notion of time, and in this same year Eliot published his fragmentary poem *The Waste Land*. His poetic writing was developed as Modernist verse dramas, stemming from the same shared philosophies that one could argue were also underpinning Laban's exploration in Modern Dance in Germany and Eastern Europe.

Certain poetic sections in his original 1930's playscript of *Murder in the Cathedral* had been cut during rehearsal as the stage director believed they were not possible to physically stage. As a matter of fact, the subjects of these rejected sections were dance and time. They were later incorporated into the first part of Eliot's poem *Burnt Norton* (1935), an extract of which I used in the workshop to expose Eliot's concept of dance-time:

At the still point of the turning world.  
Neither flesh nor fleshless;  
Neither from nor towards; at the still point,  
there the dance is,  
But neither arrest nor movement. And do  
not call it fixity,  
Where past and future are gathered.  
Neither movement from nor towards,  
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the  
point, the still point,  
There would be no dance, and there is only  
the dance.  
I can only say, there we have been: but I  
cannot say where.  
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to  
place it in time.

Using these verses as a poetic starting point allowed me to begin with physical work exploring qualities of movement governed by Time (Sustained/Sudden) and more importantly, the technique of stopping the body suddenly and finding this suspension with a fixed point in space. Seeing a moment of stillness existing as part of a turning world around an axis began an exploration of affinities between the eukinetic dynamics and the imagined choreutic spatial



scaffolding. This relationship then connected to thinking how the actor felt as an individual at these moments. Plato in *The Timaeus* had identified seven motions which match Laban's directions (up, down, forward, backward, side to side). The seventh motion is to stay in the same place in space - which could be to remain in one position as stillness or alternatively to move around an axis as turning. In this workshop, I attached Eliot's poetic line "the still point of the turning world" to this seventh motion of Laban's spatial scheme.

From exploration for the individual actor, I then directed movement exercises for the group as an ensemble, working as a harmonious chorus and also giving responsibilities for individuals to direct the changes of movement from within the ensemble. Now we were ready to put these ideas together with the Verse Chorus of the Women as they voice their fears that opens *Murder in the Cathedral*. I divided the whole group into smaller groups of three participants and each trio were given a few lines of the text to which to apply these methods. Each trio produced a sequence of movement inspired by this poetic text. To perform this, some used the actual words, others got the sense in translation and performed in silence, one group had an opera singer who sang the Portuguese word for fear "medo" to be part of this Laban tanz-ton-wort rendition. These sections were then combined when "time please" was called, and the group gave a final performance of their interpretation of the opening chorus, all the while travelling in a site-specific way, towards the actual cathedral standing in view ahead of them. A powerful moment where the actor-dancers from many different backgrounds had united in a moving choir exploring the concept of time as an inspiration for drama. Hopefully this short, still, moment will produce more turning, as from the workshops there are now actor-dancers in Brazil who hope to stay connected with LGI by joining the Moving Actor Hub, and we will see what type of drama they produce.

After all the in-depth talking and discussing, there was a closing ceremony performance. It surprised us by being set-up in the space while we were all focused on the projected powerpoint of Ali Curtis-Jones' lecture TITLE, prior to which several distinguished individuals who had been involved in development of Laban, dance and choreography in Brazil over many years were honoured. This performance was reminiscent of the opening event as an unexplained happening but after being connected for several days we had by now a better way to engage with the unknown. We had been together as artists and shared the thinking

that generated practice. Even so, I am sure we did not all have the same way of engaging with the performance, so I am reluctant to give my critique of this work as anything with fixed meaning, although it did seem that this final piece could be taken as a metaphor for the process of what LABAN 22+ had initiated: finding an essential idea and letting it develop into an artistic creation with opportunity for participatory engagement.

There was a quartet of dancers dressed in red, arranged around a red scaffold of a tetrahedron that gradually was exploded as the dance expanded, transmuting into more triangular scaffolding all interlinked and revealing a deconstructed icosahedron which kept moving and reforming into different configurations. The graphic design of the happening, the simple architectural line drawings, had now become three dimensional and had begun to dance in the performance space with physical bodies. More dancers joined and other forms of media were involved, such as tv screens, projections and lighting, so that there was a constant crossing over of dialogues between different dancers and media.

The performance required us not only to explore by looking, but to actively scan the QR codes taped to the dancers' bodies to then activate other movement material presented individually to us on our own technological devices. Again, as an audience we were invited to situate ourselves as we wished, going close to see detail or remaining further away to see the larger picture. I confronted the unknown and activating my own artistic engagement lessened the fear. In 2022, as in 1922, the world we live in can certainly pose political issues that generate fear, but hopefully we can find a positive future by connecting internationally and creating an artistic response that we share between us.

## ENCONTRO LABAN 2002

Su Johnston, former Vice Chair of the Guild, received a LUTSF award to travel to Brazil for the inaugural event. Her paper was on 'Integrated Movements'.

The paper is available via the LGI website <https://labanguildinternational.org.uk/magazine-archive/>

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The Trustees of Laban Guild International were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Ann. She joined the Guild in 1978 and joined Council as Membership Secretary in 1986; later, in 2014, she became Interim Secretary and Course Officer. She worked tirelessly for the Guild, particularly in Ireland, so it is no surprise that when the Guild evolved into LGI that Ann volunteered to be one of the first trustees.

**Janet Lunn**, who worked closely with Ann, writes: Ann was my hero, my inspiration and my encourager through all the years I knew her. Although I was the nominal Chair of the Training Committee, she was the powerhouse behind every course we set up; indeed, I say 'we' when, in truth, it was Ann's skills, contacts and high energy that got anything done and the rest of us just offered help where we could, doing the jobs Ann was not so adapted to or didn't have time to do!

For many years, the core of the Committee was Ann, Sheila McGivering and me - we met three or four times a year at the Festival Hall on the South Bank for wonderful days together and got a phenomenal amount done because Ann was always so organised and well prepared. We made a great team, we decided, because from the point of view of Action Profiling, I worked in the horizontal plane gathering information and generating ideas, Ann would then take over in the vertical plane and make decisions about how and who to contact to make the course happen and then Sheila would get out her diary and plunge into the sagittal plane and tell us which dates and that she would be booking the space and her hotel rooms as moderator.

The students loved her because they all knew how much she cared about each one of them as well as Laban's philosophy and wisdom. She kept in touch with past students and was a source of encouragement and help for the rest of their lives, advising them, organising reunions, maintaining contacts as well as befriending them and their families. One of our last in-person groups are meeting up soon in Ware, where the course was

held, some of them travelling across the country to be together again and remember Ann.

Her legacy is enormous. Community Dance in the UK and Ireland would not be what it is without Ann, I believe. Nobody can ever replace her. We all owe her so much, some people their whole careers. I miss her dreadfully and often find myself weeping as I go to email her a picture or a thought and realise she's not there for one of our epic two-hour phone calls.

She would not want us to grieve her loss though but raise a glass and remember happy times dancing and laughing together "into the wee hours" as she'd say! We were lucky to have been part of her life and have her as part of ours.

**Arline Balmer** writes of Ann's work in Ireland

From the far reaches of Limavady in Northern Ireland, Ann became aware that Helen Lewis was teaching Laban classes in Belfast and, of course, in her usual way she made contact. Helen was trained in Prague, in a school of dance approved by Laban himself, and set up by one of his pupils. She found herself caught up in the Holocaust, survived and in 1947 arrived in Belfast. Helen's Laban classes added another dimension to the dance scene in Northern Ireland and her performance group also presented her choreography widely in the theatre and other venues.

Ann formed links with many of Helen's Laban dancers and she recognised the need to develop Laban's work further in Northern Ireland. She worked enthusiastically and tirelessly with her contacts in the Laban Guild to set up the first course in Northern Ireland, organising flights, hotels and venues for amazing Laban tutors. Over half of the course members were dancers taught by Helen Lewis, and Helen was delighted to know that her work was being opened to a wider audience. To complete the course students had to attend a Summer School in Eastbourne and Helen had the pleasure of attending, which delighted everyone. All this was thanks to Ann's brilliant organisation, encouragement and enthusiasm. A second successful course, with the same dancers, followed very quickly.

Pleased as Ann was with us, she was determined to offer Laban courses to all those interested, and so began decades of dance courses and Summer Schools in Ireland inspired by Ann's enthusiasm for Laban's work. 'Laban Movement' was explored from Belfast to Dublin, Maynooth, Kildare and Cork. Practitioners arrived from England, while several grew from local based facilitators. Ann knew how the work which she promoted could be used in many different fields, so doctors, teachers, artists, therapists, musicians, actors and many others listened to her advice and signed up on a Laban course. We never really knew the hard work she put in to make another course happen, it just happened out of the ether. Ann was always there to help and advise everyone who needed it. There was a calmness about her as she quietly dealt empathetically with anyone who had a worry or a concern.

Those of us who progressed out of the ranks to assist with the courses got to know Ann as a true friend. We enjoyed her company at the dinner table in the evening and exchanged family news; she was so proud of her family. We also enjoyed the odd glass or two of wine with her along with stories, jokes and reminiscences. Every now and then she employed her expertise with a pen to draw little stick figures which helped to explain some of the movement material being taught. Ann was just so talented.

It is strange to think of her no longer being with us and we can only hope that she knew how much we, here in Ireland, appreciated her and how much she will be missed.

Ann wasn't a link in the chain. She was the padlock, and she had the key.

**Helena Softley Eden** has compiled memories of Ann from the Creative Dance Leaders Course participants of 2018/19

Nine of us were extremely lucky to take the Laban Creative Dance Leaders Course a few years ago and we so benefitted from Ann's wonderful teaching and sharing of her experiences. As a group, we really bonded and have since kept in touch via email, phone calls and zoom get togethers. We were determined to have a re-union dance day and I'm thrilled to report that those of us who could make it did that very thing one weekend in July this year. We dedicated our day to Ann's memory, re-learning her fun warm up to 'Savage Garden's track 'Lemon Tree' and analyzing choreography using the Laban language we had been taught, noticing how much knowledge we had gained from the course and the summer schools that she was so much at the heart of, and so intrinsic in organising. I know Ann was very pleased that as a group we had stayed in touch and I think she would have been really happy that we had such a wonderful day together dancing, catching up and discussing our group's future.

Below are some of the comments and memories that we wrote in our condolence card to Ann's family.

**Kirsten Kaluzinski:** 'I remember Ann's ease, approachability and sense of fun in doing what she loved. I particularly enjoyed the little dance we did to 'I'm too sexy' using various 'imaginary' props as our fashion accessories. And the 'Picture this' video, which was hilarious. Ann was a dear, lovely soul'

**Baris Celilogu:** 'I was a student of dear Ann and I absolutely adored her! I learned a lot from her. She was caring and giving! A wonderful person!'

**Naz Yeni:** 'Ann will be greatly missed and her absence will be a huge loss for all the students, teachers and the dance community. I am truly thankful to her for everything she has done for us.'

**Lucie Lee Sykes:** 'I met Ann at the Laban Summer School many years ago. I loved her warmth and every time I spoke to her, her smile brightened up my soul. She was a very encouraging person, always listened, and her passion for continuing Laban's Summer School was so very heart-warming. I got to know her more on our dance leaders' course, and she was always supportive. I loved her sessions and one dance I we always talk about is the dance she shared with

us with the song 'Lemon Tree'. Ann, you will be truly missed, and we will dance 'Lemon Tree' for you.'

**Kristina Haladikova:** 'Ann will be missed so much. She inspired me; she re-awakened the lost passion for dance in me. For this I'll be forever grateful. I'm so glad I got to meet her and experience her teaching.'

**Pauline Cockburn:** 'Ann, a lady to be admired. Strong dependable, caring and supportive. My thanks for her encouragement, to keep dancing, for the amazing Summer School and Creative Leader Course. She gave us all a magical, truly life changing experience. We laughed and danced together...'

**Charmian Wylde:** 'Ann will be greatly missed but her memory will live on through the joyous dance she inspired in those who were lucky enough to work with her.'

**Paul Elven:** 'It has been such a gift to have known Ann. Her warmth and kindness always shone through in all she did. I have such rich memories of the joy and fun of recent Laban Guild Summer Schools and the Creative Dance Leaders Course in Ware – experiences created by Ann that were immensely valuable, hugely inspiring and truly life changing! Ann will be greatly missed, and by so many.'

**Helena Softley Eden:** 'I was so very sad to hear about Ann's passing. She was a true inspiration to me, and all on our course. I first met her at the Summer School in about 2005. (This was the best weekend I had had since my wedding 6 years earlier!) Hers was the first face I met – patiently and efficiently doing all the admin and making us feel so welcomed! Over the years she instilled in us such a love of Laban, and we benefitted greatly from her teaching, experience, wise words and kindness. I can truly say it changed my life. Thank you Ann.'

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Fee: £10 per workshop  
Contact: 07970 536643  
Email: [jennyfrankel.laban@gmail.com](mailto:jennyfrankel.laban@gmail.com)

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