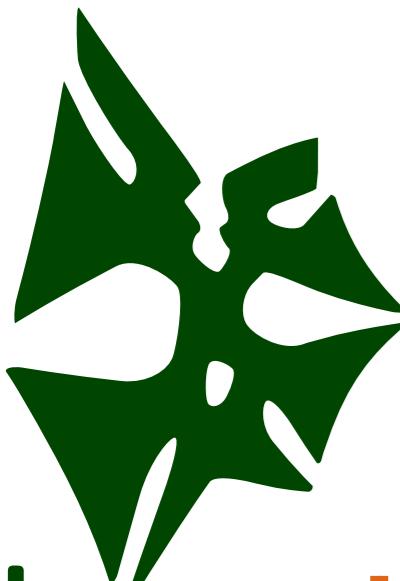


# *Movement, Dance & Drama*





**Laban**  
Guild International

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**Editor:** Dr Clare Lidbury  
43 Bittell Road  
Barnet Green  
Birmingham  
B45 8LU  
Email: editor@labanguildinternational.org.uk

**Editorial Team:**  
Dorothy Ledgard  
Pam Anderton

**Correspondents:**  
**Trustees:** Pam Anderton, Dr Sara Houston,  
Dr Clare Lidbury, Darren Royston,  
Email: trustees@labanguildinternational.org.uk  
**Subscriptions**  
Email: secretary@labanguildinternational.org.uk  
**Drama:** Darren Royston  
Email: drama@labanguildinternational.org.uk

**Pre-printing Production:** Pam Anderton  
Email: magazine@labanguildinternational.org.uk

**Printing:** Mickle Creative Solutions  
Unit 2, Dane John Works, Gordon Road,  
Canterbury CT1 3PP  
Phone: 01227 780001

**Distribution:** Dorothy Ledgard  
Email: distribution@labanguildinternational.org.uk

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## Editorial

Thank you to all of you who responded to my Editor's Provocation in the last issue of the magazine; some of the material submitted is in this magazine and some is held over until the next edition. Enid Bailey's letter set the Trustees thinking and their response appears alongside her letter. In addition, we have a follow up to research presented at the last LGI on-line forum and reports of the Sanqhuar Festival, some of which was supported by LGI.

Enid has shared her memories of her time at The Art of Movement Studio – do they coincide with yours or are your memories quite different? Do get in touch if you would like to share your recollections or anything else Laban-based you think your fellow subscribers may be interested in reading.

## Letter to the Editor

Enid Bailey

Dear Clare,

Thank you for all your efforts for the Guild and the magazine.

Maybe it is not just the purpose of the magazine that is in question but the purpose of the Guild itself. There is probably an official statement in the constitution about the purpose. It probably needs re-thinking.

Laban's work had numerous purposes. Each one was served by his movement analysis and how this related to so many aspects of life. One of his earliest opportunities to work in this country came through education and was particularly valued by the West Riding [Yorkshire]. It is a tragedy that creative movement/dance has been more or less abandoned in schools especially in Key Stages 1 and 2 where it never had a firm hold any way. This is because it was linked to PE and PE training colleges and not to the arts. At the present time when so many young children are seriously disturbed, they are being denied this vital and therapeutic element of the curriculum. Every child deserves the chance to benefit from all that it can offer.

If the Guild could develop a policy to further creative movement/dance in schools, it would restore a true and traditional sense of purpose to the Guild and guarantee Laban's legacy. I shall return to this 'purpose' after following an 'indirect pathway'!

I am now 85 and look back on a wonderful year at the Art of Movement Studio in Addlestone, Surrey (1960-61). I lived on the premises and lived and breathed dance around the clock. It was a privilege to be taught

## Trustees Report

The Trustees continue to meet regularly via zoom. After much reflection they have decided that the number of issues of the magazine will be three each year, beginning in January 2025. Final copy deadlines are given on the inside cover.

There is much material on-line offering guidance and inspiration to non-dance specialists for what to teach so, prompted by Enid Bayley's mention of her 'creative dance guidelines', we are proposing that the excellent work (in the form of lesson plans, schemes of work and so on) that many of our subscribers have done in the past should be made available to others via the LGI website. This way the excellent Laban-based practice that so many subscribers developed during their teaching careers can be shared. If you have teaching materials that you think may be useful to others that you are prepared to share (and which have no copyright issues) please get in touch with the editor in the first instance.

by Lisa Ullman, Athalie Knowles, Geraldine Stephenson and Betty Redfern. The thrill of being inspired by a dramatic Lisa! The mystery of Athalie's transformation of all our 27 students into amazing group interactions with scarcely a word spoken! The joy of pure dance with Gerry - the highlight of my week! She was a double act with Graham improvising on the piano. Once a dancer, always a dancer.

Betty Redfern was the tutor of our small group of eight students straight from teacher training college. She taught us Laban's principles, basic space and effort extremely thoroughly. We flew and fell with the diagonal scale, rose and sank repeatedly in the dimensional scale and explored the icosahedron inside and out! We learned every effort action and transition and related it to the effort cube. We did all this with bound and free flow. She insisted that we felt it 'in the body' so that it became an integral part of us.

At the time I resented that we were not allowed to learn the more advanced spatial scales that our elders were learning. Some of them had much less dance experience than we did. But, looking back, I am thankful for Betty's solid grounding. In a sense this was enough. Her training never let me down and provided me with everything that I needed in my teaching career.

The one thing the studio tried vaguely to do and failed was to teach people - especially teachers of young children - how to teach. That was probably just as well because I went on a joyous journey of discovery with my class of 44 reception children (and all other age groups after the infants went home). As any teacher knows the children teach you as much as you teach

them, and teachers never stop learning.

Giving the children plenty of freedom with a subtle input based on the observation of each child and encouraging every child became a pattern where they moved and learned naturally. People massively underestimate what Key Stage 1 children can achieve. My last ten years of teaching were with 6- and 7-year-olds. They were so expressive and agile because they had followed this natural learning pattern from starting school. They understood so much about effort and space. They loved to work together. They could all lead with a tambourine. They were all enthusiastic about movement. Watching a child grow in confidence when they experience feeling strength for the first time or seeing concentration improve after being able to achieve sustainment shows clearly in their more balanced personalities.

I am filled with horror at what so many children are being given as 'healthy exercise'. Imagine the state of a class following some frenzied response to inappropriate music or being taught by someone who comes and goes and does not know them and their families.

Incidentally the basic principles given to me by Betty are sufficient for all age groups. (I am not including those who have reached the stage of exploring beyond Laban's work or who are developing their own theories.) I have worked with teachers and student teachers. It is not the content of the work but the level of presentation that varies with age groups.

This letter is really a last-ditch plea for a campaign to take Laban's work back into schools and maybe the time is right. Some educationists are recognising the tremendous pressure that formal education and limited arts are placing on teachers and children.

The timing was not right for me when, with six other teachers, we put together PE guidelines for Key Stages 1 and 2. I wrote the section on creative movement which formed the basis for the other aspects of PE. Administration delays meant our completed work was not published until years later. It was launched just before the National Curriculum was introduced. Schools were obliged to follow the limited information on movement teaching. For most teachers the subject had not been included in their teacher training. I doubt if that has changed.

I have twice passed my movement guidelines to the Guild thinking they could be useful. School that continued to use them enjoyed the free approach which enabled them to make choices based on the children's needs and experiences. I suspect the two copies of the guidelines never reached consideration by the Guild committee and I had no plans to offer them again but if these flexible lesson plans were to be a regular feature of the magazine they might help teachers and children learn together in an ongoing way.

It seems to me that the magazine needs to know and serve its audience. It is good that the magazine has the input of the high calibre writer Darren Royston and other specialists with an advanced knowledge of Laban's work. But if, as sometimes happens (because of lack of contributors) the magazine is heavily weighted with complex subjects, people with lesser understanding can find it off-putting and - dare I say it? - pretentious.

At this level the magazine serves a minority. Perhaps that is its purpose?

I found it refreshing to read Sarah Houston's account of working with those who have Parkinson's disease. It is heartening to read that Keep Fit is now linked to Laban's principles. The opportunities to dance in Laban-based classes is encouraging. I know that a lot of work from Laban Guild members went into that community work. A goal achieved!

The time is certainly right for making dance accessible to everyone. Programmes such as *The Best Dancer* and *Strictly* have captured the imagination of people of all ages. I cannot believe the technique of so many dancers. They seem to do the impossible! Contemporary Dance is showing Laban influences. Men dancing is not just acceptable but expected (a vast difference from my days). Just today Blackpool Tower has announced a month's Festival of Dance.

Surely someone in the Guild has access to those reviewing the curriculum or the Guild committee could make contact with the Department of Education. If that became possible, then dance/creative movement could be given its rightful place in the school day.

Finally (at last I hear you say!), dance has never been my only passion and painting is one of my serious hobbies. It involves traditional and experimental artwork but even here I find Laban's influence creeping in. I leave you with a recent work "Dazzled by Pots and Pans".

Thank you again to all those who share their knowledge and experiences. May Laban's work return in full force and the magazine flourish.

Yours sincerely,  
Enid Bailey

### Editor's Response

Enid has made some very useful points here and it is worth responding to them from an editorial and Trustees' perspectives.

The purpose of the Guild is stated in the constitution which was approved at the AGM on 21st March 2021 and is available at <https://labanguildinternational.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/LabanGuildInternationalConstitution.pdf>; an extract is provided as an appendix at the end of this response. The magazine aims to support the purpose of the Guild.

The Trustees have long thought of how to get Laban's work back into schools. This process is stymied on two counts – teacher training and changes in the education system. In the last forty years teacher training has changed drastically. The days of a four- or five-years B. Ed in dance, such as those studied at Worcester College of Higher Education or Bedford College of HE in the 1970s and '80s, are long gone. Many of the PGCEs courses in Dance, such as those at Exeter or Bedford universities, have closed and now other routes into teaching (ie. training on the job with some input from approved providers) proliferate including School Direct, School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), Teach

First and Teacher Apprenticeships all of which led to QTS (see <https://getintoteaching.education.gov.uk/train-to-be-a-teacher>). It is easy to see that any training in dance as part of the National Curriculum for PE in these schemes will be minimal given all that the courses have to cover.

The National Curriculum (NC) was introduced in September 1989 and updated in 1995. A new NC began teaching in 2000 and the current NC dates from 2013. Since its inception dance has sat in physical education. The subject content for dance is minimal: at Key Stage 1 "perform dances using simple movement patterns; at KS2 "perform dances using a range of movement patterns" (see [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c4edfed915d3d0e87b801/PRIMARY\\_national\\_curriculum - Physical\\_education.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c4edfed915d3d0e87b801/PRIMARY_national_curriculum - Physical_education.pdf)); at KS3 "perform dances using advanced dance techniques within a range of dance styles and forms"; and at KS4 "develop their technique and improve their performance in other competitive sports, [for example, athletics and gymnastics], or other physical activities [for example, dance] (see [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c74e2e5274a5255bce5f/SECONDARY\\_national\\_curriculum - Physical\\_education.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c74e2e5274a5255bce5f/SECONDARY_national_curriculum - Physical_education.pdf))

While initially the dance component of the NC for PE drew on Jackie Smith Autard's mid-way model – a combination of Laban's work plus aspects of professional training – which formed the basis of much dance teaching in education at all levels, dance in the NC would seem to have become firmly rooted in performance, ie. a product. With no mention of creativity or process it is hard to see how Laban's work sits within dance in this context, especially when teachers have not had any training in his thinking.

Dance specialist teachers were employed for B Tech Dance, GCSE Dance, AS level Dance (phased out six years ago) and A level Dance. It is interesting that in the thirteen years between 2008/9 and 2021/22 numbers for those taking GCSE and A level Dance have fallen significantly – for GCSE just over a 50% drop from 16,589 to 8,268 and for A level a drop of c. 40% from 1966 to 1198 (see <https://www.onedanceuk.org/media/xpuoxjgb/gcse-as-and-a-level-and-dance-statistics-2024-update.pdf>). Factors in this may be the more practical nature of BTech Dance and/or the introduction, in 2010, of the English Baccalaureate (EBacc), an accountability measure in England, which measures the proportion of children who take a minimum of seven GCSEs and who secure a grade 5 or above in five subject areas - English, Maths, Science, a humanity and language GCSE; noticeably arts subjects are not included. The government's ambition (as of 2019) was "to see 75% of pupils studying the EBacc subject combination at GCSE by 2022, and 90% by 2025" (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc/english-baccalaureate-ebacc>). However, as the Cultural Learning Alliance noted:

The initial introduction of the EBacc had an immediate and significant impact on what children studied at secondary school – an early poll from Ipsos Mori showed that 27% of schools cut courses as a direct result of its implementation. Historic analysis ... revealed that this disproportionately affected arts courses – especially for pupils in disadvantaged areas.

(<https://www.culturallearningalliance.org.uk/what-is-the-ebacc/>)

The EBacc is a means to measure school achievement, so the more pupils who achieve the EBacc the higher up the league table a school is placed. By dropping arts subjects students have more curriculum time to achieve success in the five stated areas. This, and the importance attached to STEM subjects, has undoubtedly impacted on the number of pupils studying dance in school and the number progressing to study dance in HE, which has led to the closing of dance degrees at many universities in the UK. Fewer dance graduates mean fewer dance specialists teaching in schools, fewer schools offering dance as a discrete subject means fewer dance teachers are needed with fewer pupils progressing to study dance in HE; the cycle goes on.

With regards to whether anyone in the Guild has access to those reviewing the curriculum, the short answer is 'no' although the longer answer is that the Trustees do what they can through liaising with other organisations such as the Movement and Dance Division of the Sport and Recreation Association (<https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/>). The major advocating organisation for dance in the UK is OneDanceUK (<https://www.onedanceuk.org/>) which was formed in 2016 following the merger of four existing organisations - The Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADAD), Dance UK, National Dance Teachers Association (NDTA) and Youth Dance England. The Trustees will investigate further interaction with this organisation.

Enid asks who the magazine is for, which is a good question and one which determines the content. It is for subscribers but made available to everyone via the LGI website when the magazines are uploaded. Every magazine, from its first publication in 1947 to 2020, is available here <https://labanguildinternational.org.uk/movement-dance-drama/> While not its original intention the magazine has become an historical record of Laban's work and influence frequently referenced by (the few) Laban scholars.

Notably, the current list of subscribers has no school-based teachers, a very different picture from the lists of members from the past, although some are retired teachers and lecturers. Subscribers will know that the Laban Guild was re-formed in 2021 as the on-line Laban Guild International because it was not sustainable in its old format: member numbers had dropped, as had attendance at summer schools and AGMs, and members were not volunteering to serve on the organising Council. New subscribers have come as a result of the annual on-line forums, organised and run by the four trustees of LGI, which have sought to bring together people working with Laban's theories and ideas. (Recordings of the presentations are on the website and summary reports of the forums were published in the magazine.) In the absence of Laban's work in dance contributors often come from areas other than dance and dance education such as drama and theatre, opera and technology offering perspectives undreamed of twenty years ago let alone in Laban's day. These people contribute their work to the magazine which perhaps explains why, for some, it may seem pretentious. As Editor, I am aware of this and Subscribers will know that in my editorial I ask frequently for contributions for the

magazine inviting you to, for example, review, reflect on or reminisce about your experiences of Laban's work. The upside of the esoteric articles is that the magazine has some content: without these contributions the magazine may well have folded some time ago.

*Appendix:*

The purpose of the Organisation shall be the promotion and advancement of the study and practice of human movement particularly recognising the contribution made by the late Rudolf Laban and as ancillary thereto the following subsidiary purposes.

a) To provide opportunities for the exchange of ideas and the promulgation of knowledge of human movement and to foster awareness of the significance of movement particularly but not exclusively in the spheres of dance performance, choreography, dance in education, recreative dance, drama, therapy, action profiling, personality assessment and ergonomics as recognised areas of Laban's work.

b) To encourage and participate in research into the study of human movement and to publish the results of such research.

c) To promote the development of movement as an art form.

d) To promote lectures, courses, conferences and discussion groups to impart a wider understanding of the artistic, cultural, educational and therapeutic significance of the art of movement.

e) To promote live demonstrations, festivals, re-creative and community dance groups and other like expositions.

f) To do all such matters and things as may appear to the Organisation to be incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above-mentioned objects or any of them but only with the approval and confirmation of the Charity Commission.



## Creative Movement Hacking

*Cora Gasparotti*

The photos here by Marco Beghi are of the session of Creative Movement Hacking (CMH) from 29 June 2024, at the Teatro India, during the Dominio Pubblico Festival I FutuRome in Rome. They show the second session which was open to a mixed audience of performers, actors and dancers, and people who have nothing to do with the performing arts.

The Creative Movement Hacking method is a support technique created by Cora Gasparotti that uses new technologies of various kinds to work on body awareness and movement, both for the purpose of training for performers, and for the well-being of the person (see the report of the LGI December 2023 on-line forum in the April 2024 magazine). Developments



of the method worked on in these sessions are that a continuous flow-ritual structure was created in which external people, when asked and needed, also become part of the individual explorations of those within the circle, going, for advanced levels, to break the stable balance of shared solitude to flow into participated solitude, where those who interact from physical reality creates physical limits that then lead to live differently the virtual simulation, intensifying the work on the emotions and the embodiment of the same. Additionally, for the first time, we had a musician playing wave drums live for us, a master accompanist, Marco Ariano, intertwining physical sound with a virtual world so as to mix several stimuli at the same time and work simultaneously on visualization and simulation, and contact with reality and the physical body.

*Darren Royston writes:*

I had the honour to be invited to Cora's studio in Rome in June to engage in the virtual reality experience - wearing the headgear and finding the platonic solids in a virtual world all around me. We explored the changes of effort qualities, with moves being translated into sounds. Spatial rhythms were developed with this different way of receiving an aural response to a physical action.

The VR programme based on Laban's use of scaffolding to understand spatial sequence was particularly interesting to me. Each of the platonic solids (tetra/cube/octa/ico/dodec) could be selected as small, medium or large size. In the medium, I could place myself comfortably - just as I had worked within bamboo shapes hanging in the studios of the Laban

Centre in London when I was a student over thirty years ago. This time, however, I could see the trace forms more clearly from within as my hand was captured by the camera and I felt immersed in the geometry. When I selected a larger version of the scaffold shape, I could make moves that projected further into extended superzones. There was also the smaller version, which meant I had to move around a more precise grid, using the floor, sitting, crawling and imagining how small moves could embody this shape within my body sphere. I tried to execute all the standard Laban scales, and found more precision using this equipment, but Cora also encouraged me to be more creative, make different sequences, and really let the scaffold be a structure I could play around with. The scaffold never goes away in this virtual world, but I can choose to unite with it, or interact with it harmonically or in aggressive opposition.

The third form of VR program was a manipulation of my hands - fingers grew long, hands joined, fingers grew other little hands, hands enlarged and were transformed and disformed! The shock of seeing a different physical body generated by my own surge of energy was immense, and made me want to laugh - however, as the sequence repeated, I started to see how this peripheral awareness of the gesturing hands could then be developed into the physical movement of the whole torso: a new way of letting gestures merge into postures. The session was fun- but certainly thought provoking.

Link to the Creative Movement Hacking website:

<https://www.movementhacking.it>

## Impressions of Sanquhar Festival 2024

*Monika Koch*

“Die Grenzen, die Du in deinem Kopf hast, sind die einzigen Grenzen, die es gibt”

(The limits you have in your head are the only limits)  
Rumi

One of the highlights of my experience at the Sanquhar Festival in Scotland was the summer solstice day, where the local community and Nonsuch Dance along with guests from America Brazil and Europe came together. The performances included community concerts of folk songs, Denise Telles Hofstra singing poetry by Villa-Lobos, a medieval dance ritual dedicated to the planets by Nonsuch Dance Company, movement presentations by the local children, and a dance installation in nature titled *Balance* by Keneish Dance from Birmingham.

I felt that the enchanting open-air location chosen for this event with its unique atmosphere was ideal. There were dogs running through the fields as the villagers were singing folk songs, the sun just breaking through the clouds as dancing planets conducted by Darren

Royston interacted with the sky, Denise singing, birds flying, children playing, the sound of the gentle breeze and nature doing its best to connect with life, the everlasting flow of energy, and the silence behind everything: an unforgettable experience. To culminate it all a dance scene from *Balance* with dancing spirals following the energy lines of the earth and gestures inspired by the life of cells. “Man and the Cosmos, Man and his relation to the World” as Laban says. Art and Life a communal experience.

I felt that opening the festival in this way prepared us for our later Laban-based research work on Laban dance dramas and created a contact with the village community, so that they could get a glimpse of a dance theatre experience, that they perhaps might not normally experience, and could be encouraged to participate in workshops at a later stage of the festival. We later had the opportunity to explore some of the images of *Balance* in a workshop, and the following day we could see the full show. The wealth of choreographic material was inspiring, I admired the research that had

gone into this work, the commitment of the dancers and their virtuosity.

It seemed disappointing that there was a smaller audience for the indoor performance. However, I believe that even with a larger audience, the impact would not have been as profound as in the outdoor installation where the interaction between Art and Life in the natural surroundings and the communal experience of art was essential; “Life and Art are a Unity” as Laban puts it.

Another instance where life and art intertwined was in our Victorian dance improvisation at a local café-bar, expertly led by Darren. His ability to transform everyday situations into celebrations of life was inspiring and motivating. Poetry of Dance, rising out of an everyday life situation in a café-bar, was just like a dream, to the surprise of the guests, who felt at home in this cafe, where everything is familiar. Some guests were surprised, some were awakened to the desire to dance, sing and celebrate this unique moment. As I reflect on this I think that every day we walk down the same streets and see the same houses, trees, stores, neighbours. We don't even look consciously because our paths know us as well as we know them. We think we know what we see. Everyday life determines our view. As we experience Art in an everyday Life situation, we get challenged to question our routine of perception, we open ourselves to a completely new perspective of our environment/space.

Our *Midsummer Night's Dream* dance later in the evening is another precious memory. We were joined by some friends from the community for Elizabethan Dance Rituals directed by Darren. The use of costumes by Nonsuch Dance Company was powerful, as they were not just serving the dances of the period, but creating an atmosphere, just like full body masks, completely transforming the movements of the dancers. They were no longer just dancing the steps but transforming into characters: amazing. I thought of Wigman's *Life Dances*. “But when does the dancer reach for the mask, then when the creative urge triggers a splitting process in him, i.e. when his imagination reveals to him the image and essence of a seemingly alien figure and forces him to overcome the personal to transform” (Wigman).

The focus of the second part of the Festival was researching Laban's dance dramas *Prometheus* and *Agamemnon*. To help prepare for the rehearsal process I offered a brief improvisation workshop. Letting go of the rational mind can be difficult. I introduced relaxation and breathing practices to mobilize our energy and focus on movements led by our intuition. Then, movement tasks and questions based on everyday life experiences were given, encouraging each person to find their own unique response and engage in dialogue with a partner.

We then began to dive into the exploration of a Laban's dance dramas. After a brief warm up exploring principals of Harmony, Darren provided us with an overall outline of one scene of the play. We tried to

approach the inner landscape of the scene in a guided improvisation, exploring how we could embody it in 2024. We created our playground through the interplay of props, movement, sound image and text. What a challenge: improvisation as a creative tool within a larger composition, just like in jazz music moving from where we are to where we would like to be. This first stage of a rehearsal was most exciting to me. Diving into a theme together in a group through creative work can enrich us in a way that is difficult to put into words. I felt like a version of a dance community, where creativity, healing and transformation could happen, a utopia of creative gatherings, supported by the beautiful natural surroundings of, for example, Sanquhar.

How then can we create a space in which transformation can take place on both a personal and a collective level in such a fast-moving world? Let us imagine a river; when we think of the water, we actually encounter something different all the time. Atoms and molecules on the eternal journey from water to steam to drops, to ice or through the earth, to rivers and lakes, to oceans, from there into the clouds and so on.

The creation of dance communities is fluid and ever-changing, like a dynamic field of energy that is constantly forming and evolving. The time is ripe for this. The world urgently needs ways to connect opposites and differences instead of perceiving diversity as a threat. As Ionesco says “Art is a scream, a space for longing, the expression of the right to be different, which is getting lost in other areas”.

In a world where time is getting rapidly faster where materialism has reached the limits of the absurd, in a time of spiritual crisis, we need to find an ‘anti-poison’ to act against the poison.

I see the summer festival as a great opportunity for creating Art communities. Performance Art laboratories are great opportunities to work towards a utopia, to create visions and dreams for a better world. Only when we create the space and the possibility for creative energy to live can healing take place. When a man does not meet himself in the eyes and hearts of his fellow human beings, he is on the run. The more honest we can be with ourselves and others, the more we can fulfil our creative potential and become more valuable to ourselves and the community.

“Dance Dance Dance otherwise you are lost” Pina Bausch

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# Summer Solstice Event 2024

Penelope Boff

Performances were given by Nonsuch History and Dance International Summer Course participants and by those practitioners and researchers of Rudolf Laban's work and principles. These included, Opera and Laban Movement, by solo artist Denis Telles Hofstra from Rio de Janeiro Brazil while Keneish Dance presented *Balance*, a Laban-inspired contemporary piece which distilled an innovative collaboration between Science and Art with research had undertaken by Professor Darius Koester of Warwick University (LGI supported this performance). The culmination of the whole event, a Greek Mythic drama and movement performance of *Agamemnon* (that was still work in progress), was led by Darren Royston.

It gives me great joy to have been able to perform in two magnificent site-specific open-air theatre spaces in the space of two years. The first was at the Dora Stratou Theatre, Athens, performing during the UNESCO 60<sup>th</sup> Dance Research Congress. Here Darren Royston and I presented our inspired idea of working in this incredible open-air amphitheatre at the Crawick Multiverse near Sanquhar in Scotland. What is particularly special about each of these places is that when performing one becomes completely in touch with a heightened sense of one's surrounding environments. Both places are imbued with significant harmonic cosmic energies that have a relationship not only to the past and present but also to the future. To look at the similarities between them on the one hand there is the living antiquity that surrounds the site of the Acropolis with its very ancient theatre of Dionysius which is nearby the UNESCO Dora Stratou Open-Air Theatre Performance space prominently elevated on a hill, amidst an abundance of olive trees in keeping with Greek culture and myth. On the other hand, the post-modernist land-form art created by Charles Jencks which rises on a hill just above Sanquhar, fashioned with immense dramatic boulders that look like standing stones. These have been consciously aligned to make a connection to the powerful cosmic energies surrounding the Earth to extend throughout the cosmos linking not only to our planets within our solar system but to other solar systems and other vast universes beyond them. One member of the audience perceived the site to be like a modern-day sacred temple.

It is possible that the Gods were looking down on us and the Event organisers favourably, for the days of the summer solstice event and also for our Midsummer Festival of Dance and Drama were warm, dry and sunny, despite the generally wet and cold summer, we have experienced this year within the UK.

This year Nonsuch History and Dance, led by Darren Royston as Artistic Director, chose to work with two artists who have studied at Trinity College and presented the Rudolf Laban work in their productions, and so we formed our Midsummer Dance Drama Festival. In this way our programme of Dance,

Opera and Drama was able to look backwards to our distant heritage via the Medieval World and their understanding of the Planets and to expand into the more contemporary classical world of Villa-Lobos with Opera singer, Denis Telles Hostra, and her referencing of movement researched from Laban's Space Harmony. The last piece *Balance*, with Keneish Dance, looked at the very profound mechanics and the behaviour of regenerating cells. This aimed to convey to its audience a strong message of healing. Audience participation concluded the afternoon with the Medieval circle dance and song, *Sumer is icumen in*, and we danced together with everyone including our Laban specialist from Strasbourg, Monika Koch to the live music of medieval bagpipes played by Tom Hughes.

Each performance section carried its own magic into the amphitheatre and at the same time it spread out into the expanding cosmos. Each performer and member of the audience recalls their own special moment or moments - for me the creation of the Medieval World by the Seven Planets and their speeches, mine beginning with *I am Luna!* The connection that then followed to the marvellous operatic singing voice of Denise Telles that inspired an improvisation of dancing interacting with the theme of her Moon Song was brilliant, all blending within the incredible atmosphere and immensity of this site-specific venue with the sky and Scottish hills in the background.

The performance of *Balance* took us to the grass area just beyond the amphitheatre. As an audience member what I was aware of particularly was how the pink costumes and the very large balloons they used had been so carefully worked upon to produce a warmth and softness to the eye. The dance and movement was not only dynamic but also mesmerising in the way that the dancers or cells were constantly reacting to one another. It was continuous movement yes, but it involved the unexpected too; there was no place here to become complacent.

*Agamemnon*'s dramatic dance drew everyone's attention to out and beyond the space of the amphitheatre. We explored and walked individually to the outer limits of the surroundings -slowly walking in our long white tunics and white masks it was almost a dance of its own. When we came together to work finally in the amphitheatre we experienced as one the whole full sense and tragedy of the Greek drama we performed, and I think this open-air site embraced us perfectly.

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The class is for those who are trained or would like to be dancers, actors or performance artists.

Viv does not teach Laban theory, rather, in the tradition of Jooss and Sigurd Leeder who developed their professional training from Laban principles, she uses her knowledge to structure the class and the material.

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Contact: [danceprojects@btinternet.com](mailto:danceprojects@btinternet.com)

### Weekly Workshops

Led by Jenny Frankel

Taking place on Tuesdays from 12 noon to 1pm at the Primrose Hill Community Centre, 29 Hopkinsons Place, Fitzroy Road, London NW1 8TN

Fee: £10 per workshop

Contact: 07970 536643

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

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

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