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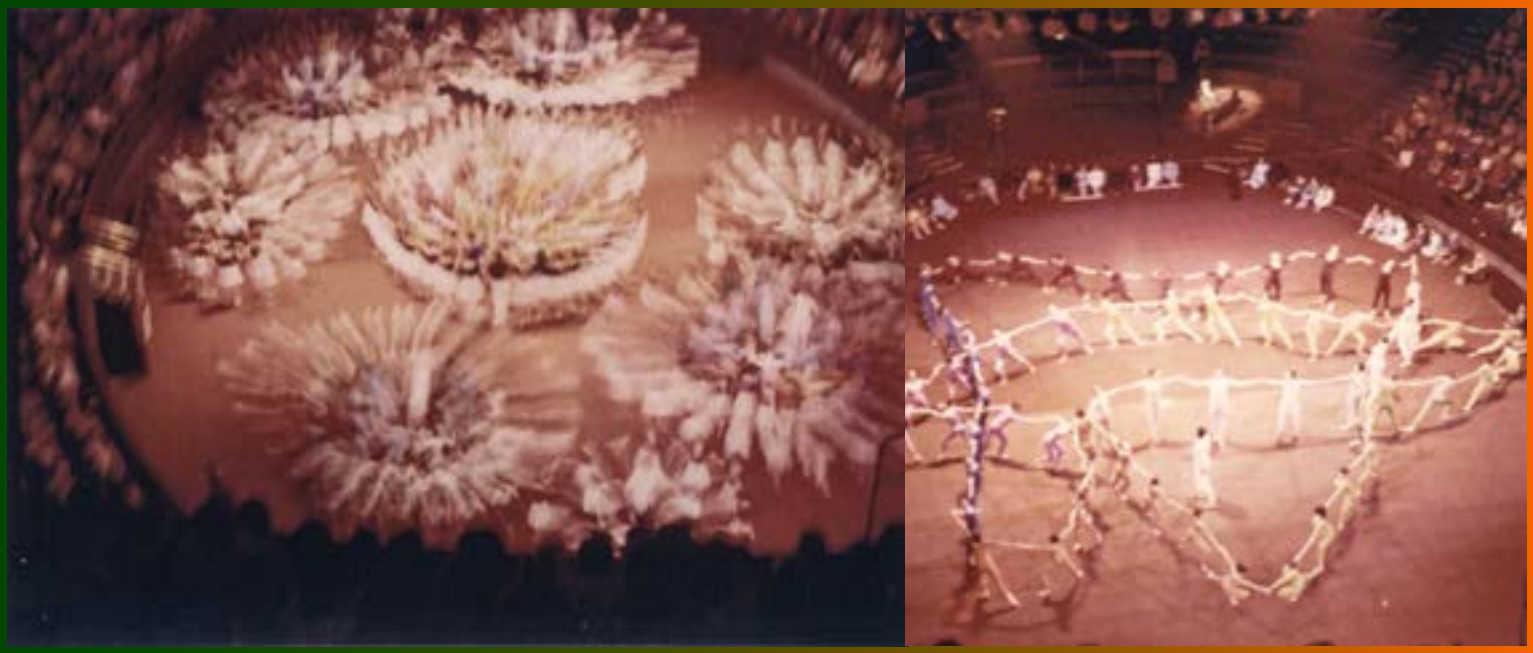
Movement, Dance & Drama



Geraldine Stephenson's Kaleidoscopia Viva at the Royal Albert Hall in 1970

Susi and Sam Thornton's Movement Choir at the CCPR Diamond Jubilee in 1995

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Laban Guild AGM 2021

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting will take place via Zoom on Saturday March 21st at 11am.

Laban Guild Council

Contents

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Editorial

It is with sadness I write that since the last edition of the magazine Gordon Curl and Sam Thornton, both of whom made huge contributions to the Laban Guild, have died; due tribute is paid to them both. If you have memories of either of them that you would like to share, please send them to me for future inclusion.

In this edition, as a reminder that Laban's thinking is still relevant today, the reflections of two theatre practitioners' use of his work are included and, as we need to focus on how the Guild moves into the future, it is timely to reprint Laban's address to the first Laban Guild AGM from over seventy years ago.

The next Laban Guild AGM is on Sunday March 21st. With the vaccine rollout and progress in treating the Covid-19 virus hopefully we will be able to meet in person soon, without physically distancing. In the meantime, however, the AGM will be virtual (via Zoom). Information is included with the magazine for how to sign up for this event: I hope to see you there.

Valerie Preston-Dunlop is awarded the Jane Attenborough Award from ONE DANCE UK

Darren Royston

Now in its 18th year, the Jane Attenborough Award is presented in memory of the founding Director of Dance UK. It honours an exceptional individual who has made an outstanding contribution to how dance is created, supported and seen, enabling the art form to thrive. This year it was given to Valerie Preston Dunlop, in recognition of her remarkable career as a dancer, educationalist and leading specialist on the life and work of Rudolf Laban.

At the age of 16, Valerie began her training with Laban at the Art of Movement Studio in Manchester. This proved to be a catalyst for her lifelong dedication to developing and interrogating Laban's expressionist dance practice.

Valerie has been a long-standing member of the Laban Guild, joining in 1947. In 1959, Valerie beame a Master of the Guild and a Professional Council Member in 1961. From 1963 to 1967 Valerie was Vice-Chairman of the Guild.

On the TRINITY LABAN website, Valerie comments on receiving the honour, saying "I am just glad that

something in my 70-year long career has touched people. Rudolf Laban looked me in the eye and said "yes, you can" and I suppose that's been my mantra ever since. To young dancers I say, "believe you can."

Shape-shifting within Platonic Planes

Darren Royston

To begin, I would like to pay tribute to Gordon Curl, for his wisdom and precise editorial skill on the subject of this article. While I was compiling my textbook for RADA, *Dramatic Dance: An Actor's Approach to Dance as a Dramatic Art*, (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2014), Gordon advised me on how to express elements of aesthetics relating to the ideas of Plato. These philosophical ideas can be connected to Rudolf Laban's rationale for exploring crystal shapes as dynamic structures in movement, dance and drama. In particular, the basic ideas of motion can be considered as being governed by the elemental directions that are suggested in Socrates' words spoken in Plato's text *Timaeus*. Gordon spoke of Laban's interpretation of this Sacred Geometry, and the way that movement modes and spatial directions could be seen to have potential for an aesthetic of harmony.

Here are some extracts from *Dramatic Dance* (pp. 23-24) which have subsequently been used by theatre and film practitioners to work with actors exploring character, and to govern the production of a dynamic stagecraft.

Four Elements

Plato believed that all physical material in the world was constructed from the Four Elements. Within the Sphere System, the Four Elements are given different geometric shapes which we now call the Platonic Solids. Laban would also consider ways to move in particular organised systems, which can be imagined as 'scaffoldings' developing sequences called 'scales'. Exercises can be developed to explore these particular geometric shapes, attaching different qualities to architectural shapes linking to human personality traits.

Element	Platonic Geometry	Dramatic Quality
Fire	Tetrahedron (pyramid) (4 sides) – 4 corner-points	Erratic
Air	Octahedron (diamond) (8 sides) – 6 corner-points	Suspended
Earth	Cube (box) (6 sides) – 8 corner-points	Solid
Water	Icosahedron (20 sides) – 12 corner-points	Fluid

Seven Motions

Plato, in *Timaeus*, proposes that there are seven principal directions governing all motion. These seven motions can work as a basic list of directional movements to categorize all forms of dance steps.

Forward - [1]
Backward - [2]
Side to Side - [3 and 4]
Up and Down - [5 and 6]
Turn Around - [7]

My experience as a movement teacher, guiding students through exercises using these dimensions, is that the students quickly gain a new awareness of a sense of balance in space. The mover discovers a connection between forwards and backwards, one side with the other, and upwards and downwards motion. I still remember that intense revelatory moment that I felt when I was taught these principles by Valerie Preston Dunlop at the Laban Centre (now TRINITY LABAN). In these classes I learnt how to analyse movement using these simple directions, and I was given a new approach to movement and my awareness began to increase.

In the acting studio, from these basic spatial explorations, the Dimensional Scale can be learnt, practiced and then explored with dramatic affinities. Interaction with another actor can then follow the idea of the Defense Scale version, with one actor "attacking" with the opposing dimension. These ideas have been used recently in professional theatre and film by two graduates from the RADA MA in Text and Performance, Kelly Wilson and Jonathan Parr. They have each submitted some thoughts on how this Laban Approach inspired artistic creation.

Using the Seven Motions as Foundation for Choral Movement in Greek Odes

Kelly Wilson (November, 2020)

For Adaptivity Theatre Company's October 2020 production, I adapted and directed two of Sophocles' famous tragedies, *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone*, translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald. This contemporary adaptation retains Sophocles' text, while editing the script to create a modern exploration of fate, politics and religion. Within these two ancient Greek plays, I see modern versions of the events of 2020. King Oedipus morphs into a great doctor of the near future, responsible for eradicating the COVID-19 pandemic, while the battle between church and state, led by Antigone and Creon respectively, reflects the various protests and riots that have been occurring in the USA. This production also restores to the choral odes the music and dance elements of ancient Greek tragedy, transforming some of Sophocles' choral ode text into lyrics for original music and incorporating movement into the storytelling.

While workshopping the plays with a group of actors, the world of *Oedipus* became more clinical, the philosophies and narrative of the play expressed through intellectual debates regarding fate and destiny. However, the world of *Antigone*, set many years after the death of Oedipus, seemed earthier, the philosophies and narrative of the play driven by the ravages of civil war and expressed through actions requiring the body. In my approach to the physical theatre work of the *Antigone* chorus, I have attempted to physicalize the philosophical concepts of the play, guided by 'Ancient Ideas: Dionysian Orchestration', the first chapter of *Dramatic Dance: An Actor's Approach to Dance as a Dramatic Art* by Darren Royston, which has provided an excellent foundation for the development of the ensemble choreography of the chorus.

We began by building a knowledge of ancient Greek theatre and the role of the chorus. I introduced the actors to Plato's Seven Motions: forward, backward, side to side, up and down and turn around. Next, we used these basic steps to create movement, first moving in unison as a choral group, then in opposition to the movement created by the 'Thespis actor', who leaves the choral ensemble to interact as an individual, similar to origin of the first Greek actor. We concluded our work by pairing each chorus member with a partner, then instructing them to use the Seven Motions to create a form of dance dialogue between them. The paired chorus members explored the use of the Seven Motions to communicate agreement and solidarity as well disagreement and conflict between them.

Building on this work with the Seven Motions, we used the words of the ancient, poetic text as the ultimate guide to develop the choreography for the choral odes in *Antigone.* For example, Ode 1 of *Antigone* consists of an extended metaphor that compares Antigone to the wonders of nature and Creon to the wonders of mankind. When spoken by the chorus, this metaphor takes on the form of a debate between the chorus members who support Antigone and those who support Creon. Inspired by the imagery of nature and civilisation in Ode 1, the chorus worked as an ensemble, calling

upon their experience with the creation of dance dialogue from various combinations of the Seven Motions, to create choreography which communicates visually the philosophy that the text is trying to explore. Through this process, we were able to use the actors' bodies to create visual images that brought to life the thematic concepts of this ancient text in a manner that intrigued and engaged our modern audience.

Kelly Wilson, originally from the western United States, earned a bachelor's degree in Theatre Arts Education, with a minor in English Education, worked as a teacher and artistic director, and completed an MA in Theatre in 1999. Following her attendance at the Royal Shakespeare Company and University of Warwick course on Teaching Shakespeare, Kelly was introduced to the Laban Approach while studying for the MA Text and Performance at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London. Her MA Thesis considered the use of Laban-based approaches as part of theatre rehearsal and performance practice. See

https://www.adaptivitytheatrecompany.com

Expressing emotional states through contrasting movement modes in 'Macbeth'
Jonathan Parr

Until the pandemic prevented production, Experimentorium (see https://www.experimentoriumproductions.com/) was working on a film adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Having an understanding of Laban's contrasting movement modes played a major part in the realisation of acting, cinematography and dramaturgy. Although we have not yet been able to shoot the full work, we were able to experiment and generate a short trailer; please take a look https://vimeo.com/393674539 – it is only just over one minute in length.

The characters of Macbeth and his wife, Lady Macbeth, are in two opposing states of mind, experiencing different types of emotional turmoil. The action moves between these two scenes. There is a voice-over that expresses Macbeth's internal anguish (as a soliloquy would be used in the traditional theatre context), however the real meaning and narrative of the scenes are communicated through the non-verbal movement.

Scene 1: Macbeth is being pursued; he is in a state of panic and fear, running wildly through the undergrowth. Acting this part, my emotions were embodied in jagged, erratic and sudden moves, which gave an instability to the overall movement mode. This was heightened by the unstable terrain which propelled my moving body disjointedly from one point in space to another. This felt very similar to exercises I had done in the RADA studio with Darren, moving from one corner of the tetrahedron to the other, associated in Plato's philosophy with the element of fire.

Scene 2: Lady Macbeth's movement qualities oppose this erratic state totally. She is trying to maintain self-control, remaining physically in a fixed place, while her mental state is becoming more and more distressed. The actress, Laura Dorn, had to remain in solid cube-like postures, occasionally disrupted by more fluid motions as her mental anguish overwhelms her. The images in her mind were reflected through these micro-movements that connected to fluid patterns. These patterns were like flowing harmonic scales within the icosahedron, which Plato had associated with the element of water.

I have also found the Laban Approach training useful in stunt work. In the denouement of our upcoming film *Inside her Walls*, which we were able to film at the end of 2020, my character is tripped during a chase up a marble staircase. In order to get a close-up of this shot, it was impossible to pad the staircase or my costume. To film the scene and keep myself intact (we still had several days of filming left) I needed to start the shot from a suspended position that I could control as I fell. I kept in mind the concept of suspension in the octahedron scaffolding, which Plato associated with air. I was elevated enough to make the action genuine yet was also able to use sustained movement to fall safely against the marble. When cut together with a shot leading up to the fall, taken from a wider angle, this maintained a continuous movement flow.

This article has focussed on physical performance, but the idea of Platonic Shapes as dynamic structures has a wider influence on the craft of filmmaking itself. The director's artistic vision must consider all the elements on-screen, not only the actors; the movement of the camera-operator must also converse with the movement of the actors; the editing of the footage changes the flow of the performance. Experimentorium always uses movement and physical expression as the foundation of a project. Our award-winning first film, 'Fragments' was a piece of silent cinema and incorporates many fundamental principles shared by both Laban and the art of mime. This ensures that in whatever direction the final piece goes, at its core is a consistent, effective and expressive physical language that really carries the weight of the story-telling.

Jonathan Parr has been working as an actor and musician for over a decade. He graduated from RADA's MA in Text and Performance in 2018. He has been a member of the Laban Guild since being introduced to Laban's work at RADA by Darren Royston and this has influenced his work as both a performer and artistic director of Experimentorium, the award-winning film and theatre production company he founded upon graduating.

PHOTO CREDITS

Adaptivity Antigone 2 (*Antigone*, Parados) The Chorus: Naomi Leighton, Nathaniel Wood, Janice Molineux, Aaron Beck. Photographer: Laura Eastley.

Adaptivity Antigone 3 (*Antigone*, Parados) - Aaron Beck, Robbie Bleakley. Photographer: Laura Eastley.
Adaptivity Poster: Image: Eliot McCann (Oedipus), Olivia Brodzinski (Antigone)
Photography: Tassou AmerikanosNote: Matt Taylor replaced Eliot McCann only featured in the poster image for the production.
Fragments Live Performance: Jonathan Parr. Photographer: Laura Dorn
Macbeth 2. Experimentorium. Macbeth: Jonathan Parr.

Laban Movement Choir Project - A Joyous Experience

Helena Softley Eden

In December I was privileged to be a participant in a wonderful Laban Movement Choir organised and choreographed by Maggie Killingbeck, Susi Thornton and Janet Lunn. After months of lockdown, constraints, uncertainty, and for some, loneliness, grief and sadness, it was wonderful to come together and be able to join others in a Christmas celebratory virtual dance. Once again, Janet, Susi and Maggie had worked hard to deliver a wonderful Laban experience to us all.
This time we danced to *Gaudete – Canticum Novum*, sung by Libero. If you do not recognise it by it's title, as I didn't initially, then I recommend you look it up, as you will certainly recognise it when you hear it, and you will surely then understand why it was such a joy to dance to. It has so many wonderful changes of mood, rhythm and timing.

Each section was beautifully choreographed by Maggie, Janet or Susi. At times we were invoking Christmas feelings of wonder – peace, angels and ethereal flight. Then we showed joy and celebration and the coming together of friends and family, or decorating trees and houses, wrapping presents, celebrating, shopping, rushing around and even showing stress - all using Laban fundamentals, of course. We were given phrases to do in unison and cannon and allowed times to create our own movements.
We had the opportunity to go into break out rooms, which was wonderful as we could then meet and talk to people we had never met before, and it meant that we felt really connected. We shared and swapped choreographic ideas, and then did them as a group within the piece later on. The dance was carefully thought out and choreographed, and perfect for all levels and abilities. It really invoked the feelings of wonder, peace, stress, celebration and coming together at Christmas. At the end of the morning I was completely filled with joy. My sincere thanks to Maggie, Janet and Susi of The Laban Movement Choir Project, and particularly to Susi who had only lost her beloved Sam the week before but still chose to generously share her time with us that day.

I have been lucky enough to participate in a few movement choirs over the handful of years that I have been a member of the Guild. I was even able, a few years ago, to persuade Susi, Lydia Everett and Wendy Hermelin to hold a daylong event in my local village hall – what a treat that was for my 50th birthday week. I cannot recommend it highly enough to you should you ever get the opportunity to take part in a Movement Choir – be it online or in real life. It is rarely about performing to others, although I have been part of a group that performed to a handful once, it is all about the joy of dancing for yourself and with others.

However difficult these times are for us all at the moment, dance is such a tonic, even if we are only dancing around our kitchens when the radio is on. But if we are lucky enough to have the technology, these wonderful projects, and online classes, can keep us going and connect us to each other, until such time as we can dance together in the flesh once more. Roll on that time….

President's Address at the First Annual General Meeting of the Laban Art of Movement Guild - Chichester 27th August 1947

Rudolf Laban

Photograph by Edwin Loeb 1934

As I have the honour to be your life-long President, I am here to-day to welcome you at this, our first General Meeting. I think first of all I would like to remind you of the aims of the Association as they are set out in the Constitution:

"To establish the status of teachers and practitioners of the Art of Movement, whether in connection with education, industry or art.
To foster the exchange of ideas and experiences of those interested and engaged in this work, and to publish any records which may be of general interest to the community.
To inspire inguiry and research into the field of the Effort-Training as used in education, industry and art, as well as the Art of Movement.
To put into effect any practical measures likely to further the ideas of the Guild.
To collaborate with appropriate national and international Associations or to institute work of an international character when and where it appears opportune."

Our progress as an Association is dependent upon the continual study of the Science of Movement and appreciation of the need for systematic movement training in all walks of life.

If we look back over the history of human civilisation it reveals the rhythm of periods of enthusiasm for the cultivation of movement study, alternating with periods of disinterest and neglect. I will mention in this connection, Jean George Noverre, who, as early as the 18th century, had visions of dispensing with all the artificialities and cramping formalities of movement of his time as he saw it in the dances of the Court circles. He told his pupils to go into the streets and market squares to watch the people in their every-day actions. He was not able to achieve his purposes fully, but he struggled, all those years ago, to reach an understanding of the importance of movement which we ourselves approach to-day.

The trend of our time is, indeed, to foster the awakening interest concentrated mainly on industrial operations. In education we can confidently say it has led to acceptance of the necessity for training of the "body-mind," while in art the growing enthusiasm points to, what may be called, the renaissance of dance.

Many of you, I am sure, would like to hear how this Guild came to be formed.
A small group of teachers met together, under the direction of Miss Ullmann, to study over a long period, the new approach to movement training. They were joined by industrialists interested in training workmen, and in the observation of industrial rhythm. Then theatrical artists, actors, amateurs and producers paid increasing attention to the recent discoveries in modern movement research. This nucleus of interested people felt the need to form a professional association, both to safeguard the standard of work and as a means of spreading the study of the art of movement in this country. And so a Guild has been formed of people working in these different fields of activities.

I have been asked to give the Guild my name, because of my share in the discovery of the new approach to movement and its use for practical purposes in all these fields. I have warned the Council members that a living man is all too apt to err and to develop, so that his personal opinions might not serve as a definite basis for principles. The first condition of my collaboration is, that you must grant me the privilege to continue to try, and to err, because trial and error is the basis of all healthy development.

I think the first step towards the achievement of the aims of the Guild is an impartial consideration of all trends in the cultivation of movement which can be based In past achievement. The second is an equally impartial acceptance of all contributions towards the future development of the cultivation of movement.

Looking back, we see a very valuable tradition of historical dance, which we shall always treasure. We see also early investigations of the role of movement in educational methods. In the organisation of work, the traditional form of time and motion study can give a lead to further development. To-day, there is a general endeavour to adapt these traditions and methods to present-day needs. In the future, we must be sure that these developments keep pace with time and so we must not limit our vision by narrow preconceptions and prejudices.

The development of dance notation will be, perhaps, a good illustration of what I mean. As you know, this kind of notation was initiated as early as the fifteenth century. To that simple beginning, and its growth throughout the centuries, I contributed my notation in a form suited to present day needs in education, art and industry.

During the war it was impossible to keep in touch with all the branches of these activities, which have been established in all parts of the world. They did not fade away but went on living, developing. The presence of Ann Hutchinson at this meeting is a testimony to this. The other night, she told us of the recent developments on Laban Notation in America, and we in our turn, are telling her about the modifications and alterations we have found necessary in the intervening years. It happens that we have happily developed on very similar lines which shows the logicality of this method of notation. Ann Hutchinson has already told you the extent to which dance notation has been put to use in recording such ballets as "The Green Table" and such alterations as they have made have arisen from practical needs of the work in America.

Another example can be seen in the early Motion Study which I have developed into what we now call Industrial Rhythm. This new form of work research has also its notation derived from dance notation. In the new form of movement control in which this notation is used the factors of our rapidly growing industrial civilisation have been taken carefully into consideration. Growth consists of a continuous flux and adaptations to new needs makes any stagnation of methods impossible.

All schools or styles of dance in which the basic rules of organised body-mind movement are used should be accepted in our circle without bias, whether they spring from ballet, modern dance in Europe, modern dance in America, acrobatic, or exotic dance. This principle must also guide us in accepting all schools of motion study in industry and also in the various forms of movement study in schools. I feel it to be my personal task, in all these affairs, to smooth out differences in the various camps and to stress the importance of the common denominator of movement. This principle will also guide me in my contribution, as President of the Guild. Yet another of my tasks is to help, through my international and inter-occupational connections to spread the work of the Guild. This I have already started to some extent, during my last trip to the continent. Bearing these principles in mind I must again emphasise the need for an objective and impartial consideration of all groups so that the Guild may be a centre of encouragement for the people who are dealing with all aspects of movement.

Guild Council in the 1950s

Besides the furtherance of skill and healthy use of movement, there are certain forms of welfare work directed towards rehabilitation, in which modern effort training has been applied. Doctors and nurses have also profited from the knowledge gained in contemporary movement research. Other fields of human activity, which can profit from modern movement research have to be explored.

A further principle, which may sometimes be overlooked, is that the Guild shall not undertake any profit-making courses or schools or enterprises of any kind, nor shall it directly advertise any special method. You will realise that it is thus impossible for any officer of the Guild or its name-giver, to use the Association for the promotion of personal material advantage. As for myself, I look upon my activity as that of a free-lance artist and research worker, who, for many years, has not had a private school or a fixed method of teaching. In my lectures given impartially to such widely differentiated audiences as ballet dancers, modem dance experts, engineers, accountants, workmen, managers, doctors, etc., I stress the central interest which movement has in our time, in all its practical aspects.

I feel this viewpoint could be a guiding principle for the Guild and it is in this sense that I am ready to accept the great honour to be your life-long President and to associate my name with your organisation.

Officers of the Guild in 1947
President: Rudolf Laban
Vice-President: F. C. Lawrence
Chairman: Lisa Ullmann
Vice-Chairman: Sylvia Bodmer
Officers: Marjorie Allen, Lilla Bauer, Betty Meredith-Jones, Diana Jordan, Jean Lindsay, Evelyn March, Jean Newlove, Elsie Palmer, Anthea Platt, Warren Lamb (co-opted in place of Joan Goodrich)
Secretary: G. E. M. Stevens.
Treasurer: Doris Ransom.

Obituary for Gordon Frederick Curl MA MEd

24th October 1926 - 14th October 2020

Pam Anderton

Following service in the Royal Navy in WW2, Gordon trained at Culham (Oxon) and Carnegie College (Leeds) from 1948-1951 – where he read Combined Arts, Physical Education and Dance – and attended several summer schools with Rudolf Laban. Later he earned his MEd, with a critical study of Rudolf Laban's theory and practice of movement, and an MA (with Distinction) in Aesthetics at London University. Following teaching at Kingham Hill School (Oxon), in 1954 he was appointed to the staff of Bretton Hall College of Music, Art and Drama. in the West Riding of Yorkshire, where he taught Dance, Aesthetics and some instrumental music.

In 1960 Gordon was appointed Principal Lecturer in Combined Arts (including Dance) at Chelsea College, Eastbourne. Whilst there, he invited Kurt Jooss and his Ballet Company from Germany to perform *The Green Table* to capacity audiences in the Congress Theatre Eastbourne in 1966.

HOW THE EVENT CAME ABOUT!

In the academic year 1965, I was generously given study-leave of absence by my Principal Miss Audrey Bambra, supported by the College Governors.

My brief was to make a 'Critical Study of the Theory and Practice of Rudolf von Laban' and this I did under the tutelage of Professor Tibble of Leicester University. It became clear that Kurt Jooss, as a pupil of Rudolf Laban, played a major part in the development of Modern Dance in Europe and I therefore made my way to Germany to seek Professor Jooss' help. He was most hospitable and generous with his time and I soon learnt that he was about to travel to London to record *The Green Table* for the BBC.

It occurred to me that generations of students in our own country had not seen this magnificent work live and I therefore asked Professor Jooss if there was any possibility of he and his Company coming to Eastbourne after his recording to give a live performance at The Congress Theatre. He agreed and I promptly flew back to book the Congress Theatre for a Lecture-Demonstration and an evening performance for 6 December 1966.

The response was phenomenal and I can only thank the Principal, Miss Bambra, for the considerable support she gave me in the preparation and administration of this event. My thanks are also due to Miss Lorna Wilson, Head of Dance and Miss Varina Verdin, Senior Lecturer in Dance for their unstinting co-operation.

Gordon Curl
Principal Lecturer
Chelsea (1961-1969)

In 1969 he was appointed to take charge of degree studies at Nonington College, Dover and later as part-time tutor to the MA Course in Expressive Arts at Canterbury Christ Church University. He became External Examiner in Dance at Sussex University, De Montfort University and The Royal Academy of Dance and Chaired the London University Movement Studies Panel in the 1970s. He was Chair of NATFHE Dance for 20 years – organising large-scale conferences in London, Warwick, Aberystwyth and Bath Universities. Among his guest presenters were Martha Graham, Alwin Nikolais, Robert Cohan and Dame Beryl Grey – as well as national dance critics.

Early retirement from Nonington led to Gordon's appointment as Artistic Director and Producer of Shepway Youth Opera. Over twelve years there followed productions with Kent Youth in Schools, Theatres, Churches and Canterbury Cathedral – the last of which with 500 children in Benjamin Britten's *Noyes Fludde* and Principals from The Royal Opera House and English National Opera. He continued to develop his work on Laban's thinking by, for example: presenting at the "Festival of Movement and Dance" at the Albert Hall (celebrating the Physical Education Associations 100th anniversary, 1999), a history of Laban's work as a multi-screen presentation, with a dancer in an icosahedron descending from the ceiling; organised a one day conference, "Order or Chaos? – Laban's Artistic & Philosophical Foundations – and Beyond!" at the School of Performing Arts, University of Surrey, and presented a paper which highlighted the spiritual dimension of Laban's work (2001); and delivering "An amazing encounter with Kurt Jooss: *The Green Table* at Eastbourne" at the one day symposium, Refugee Dancers from Nazi Europe and their Contribution to British Culture, in September 2019, at the University of Wolverhampton.

Janet Lunn in the Icosahedron

Gordon was involved in the Laban Guild for many years. From 1966 to 1969, he produced a series of articles for the Guild magazine entitled *Philosophic Foundations*. Later, from 1997 to 2003, Gordon chaired the Laban Guild Council, during which time he invited Bernard Hepton, Sir Walter Bodmer and William Forsythe to become Patrons of the Guild. For a further seven years he edited *Movement, Dance and Drama* as well as contributing many articles – not least of which were regular reviews of Michael Platt's vibrant productions of Suffolk Youth Theatre.

In 2003 Gordon was made an Honorary Vice President of the Guild and in 2020 agreed to step in as President following Anna Carlisle's sudden resignation. We can only echo the words that Anna wrote on Gordon's retirement as editor in 2009, "your work has been of such a sustained high standard, vigour, and generosity of spirit that we cannot thank you enough for such a magnificent contribution."

Gordon with Marion North, Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Warren Lamb at the Guild AGM in 2006

Tribute to Gordon Curl

Michael Platt

I was truly saddened to hear of Gordon's death. He was a very special person to me during my time as Director of Suffolk Youth Theatre (based in Ipswich) from 1995 to 2011.

I first met Gordon at the Laban Guild AGMs and, as a result of this, he became a true supporter of our work in which we aimed to fuse music, dance and drama in the exploration of key theatre texts with young people aged 14- 22. Every year we mounted productions at a variety of venues - including Snape Maltings Suffolk, The Ipswich Corn Exchange and at the New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich. For every production Gordon would send the cast the most thoughtful and encouraging good luck wishes. He and Ann would then travel up from Canterbury to Ipswich to watch the production and - very special to me – Gordon would then wait in the bar to see me personally and offer his feedback on the production before travelling back home. After the show, Gordon would write the most detailed review for the Laban Guild magazine; his memory of the stage pictures, the movement, the music and interpretation of the text were incredible – describing in animated words the effect we hoped to express on stage to our audiences.

Suffolk Youth Theatre's *Romeo and Juliet*

Through the Guild magazine and Gordon's interest he brought our work to the attention of Guild members and others. He also invested huge amounts of time and energy in creating events to celebrate Laban's work around our productions. A most memorable occasion was a full day and evening event, which Gordon organised in Ipswich, based around our production that year, *Romeo and Juliet*. The day consisted of workshops, led by key Laban practitioners, a workshop on our production and, most entrancing of all – an evening soiree at a local hotel to which Gordon had invited some of the most prominent and respected members of the Laban Guild including Geraldine Stephenson, Anna Carlisle, John Hodgson, Walli Meier and Jean Newlove. They spoke of their association with Laban, their lives, their careers and shared many wonderful memories. Because of the huge respect in which Gordon was held by all, the event was packed, and the speakers were of the highest calibre. For the young people in the Suffolk Youth Theatre, as for us all, this was such a unique, memorable and inspiring experience which only someone with Gordon's energy and passion could have staged. Sadly, Suffolk Youth Theatre ended in 2011 but Gordon continued to correspond and to show great interest in my new teaching career and creative projects.

Gordon was a wonderful gentleman; I really valued and welcomed his wonderful, modest, and insightful feedback on our work with Suffolk Youth Theatre, and his genuine interest in what we were doing. His passion for the Performing Arts, and the work and legacy of Laban, have been inspirational to generations; all those who had the pleasure of meeting and working with him have benefited from his wisdom, his commitment and his tireless energy.

Michael Platt is a teacher of performing arts and was Director of Suffolk Youth Theatre 1995-2011.

A Tribute to Gordon Curl on his Retirement as Editor

Anna Carlisle

It is a tribute to Gordon's loyalty to Rudolf Laban and to the Laban Guild that he has worked for our organisation for over twelve years. He joined the Guild in the 1950's, took the Chair for six years (l997- 2003) and subsequently became Editor, followed by interim Editor until his recent retirement in 2009.

Three major events from his period as Chair stand out as flagship achievements. The first was a spectacular contribution to the Guild's participation in a Festival of Movement and Dance at the Albert Hall organised by the PEA in l999. . . In 2001 he organised a one-day Conference of research presentations in collaboration with the University of Surrey: 'Order or Chaos: Laban's Artistic and Philosophical Foundations and Beyond ...' [which] included the key speakers Dr. Carol-Lynne Moore and Dr Ann Nugent. . . Two years later he master-minded an inspirational weekend course in Drama and Movement in association with the Suffolk County Council Youth Theatre, based at the Ipswich Dance Centre. The workshops had maximum attendance, as did the wonderful evening performance of the Suffolk Youth Theatre's *Romeo and Juliet* at the Wolsey Theatre.

His role as Chair transformed seamlessly into the role of Editor. And here, over six years, we have witnessed a calibre of work which has seen the magazine rise to the level of a professional publication. In addition, whilst lifting the profile of the Guild through the quality of the magazine, he also initiated the idea of acquiring a number of distinguished Patrons . . .

I will trust that such a long track record with the Guild means that you have enjoyed yourself!

Gordon and Sam in discussion at the 2006 Guild AGM at the NRCD, Guildford.

A Tribute to Sam Thornton

28th October 1931 - 18th November 2020

Susi Thornton

How did Sam - a working class lad from the North East - come to dance and facilitate the spirit of dance in others from many parts of the world?

His first experience was ballroom dance: "if you couldn't dance, you couldn't pull the birds", he said, and ballroom dance he could do well. At the Training College, Bognor Regis, all students had to take part in all the subjects at the beginning of their arrival, and that meant Creative Dance with Mrs. Richardson - and so a seed was sown. When Susi also attended the College in Bognor and wanted to continue her studies, Sam said he was sure there was a Creative Dance school in Manchester; their research found it was now in Addlestone, Surrey - the Art of Movement Studio.

In 1963 Sam studied at Carnegie in Leeds and for his dissertation he wrote about the pioneering work of Rudolf Laban. The dissertation turned into a book, published in 1971 by McDonald & Evans, A Movement Perspective of Rudolf Laban. It also led to his meeting up with the deputy head of the College of Arts, Bretton Hall - Margaret Dunn, where he was offered a Lectureship post. At that time David Henshaw, with whom Sam and Susi had danced in Orchesis in London, brought them into Choreos, another Laban inspired dance production group that travelled up and down the country performing at colleges of education.

The Choreos Dance Group including Stuart Hopps, Brian Morgan and Sam Thornton

Sam started in Orchesis as a help to play the tape recorder but Molly Davies, the artistic director, said to him "Sam, you've got a good pair of legs, you must dance with us". Sam and Susi played a very

active part in the West Riding Movement Study Group started by Alec Clegg. Wonderful dancing days - learning, making life-long friends, and a time when Susi, with Shelly Sorkin, were proud to study to become Graduates of the Laban Guild. They were all part of the West Riding contingent in Geraldine Stephenson's wonderful Kaleidoscopia Viva which was pioneered by the Laban Guild and performed twice at the Albert Hall. Sam and Susi often remembered the gathering of all the groups at Lady Mabel College (Rotherham) and rehearsing the amazing finale for the first (and only) time - the next was in the Albert Hall.

In June 1971 Sam became a Senior Lecturer at the Laban Art of Movement Studio in Addlestone, Surrey. At his interview he noticed Warren Lamb studying him! Here was a job he loved, a time of fascination with the creativity outpouring from Lisa, from colleagues Rosie, Henry, Janet, Hen, Vera, and Trevor, and we have had many cards glowing with positive comments from students he worked with. He taught on the Summer Schools and Lisa told him in his 2nd year to take the

Movement Choir choreographed by Sam at LInC

whole course for a movement choir . . . he was stunned but he did and never looked back. At that time Sam got more involved with the Laban Guild - being on Council, being involved in teaching on the newly formed Leaders Training Scheme, and leading big events in the Albert Hall for the Guild on CCPR events. His first one was to take Laban's poem Stillness and Stir and move the poem, with Sebastian Petit beautifully reading the words. There was disappointment for the wonderful dancers that this piece did not appear on the video of the event. Sam also produced a colourful production piece to Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik. Sam was always humbled by the dedication of dancers who travelled long distances to be part of the event and which had young dancers as well as older dancers performing together - this is what dance was all about for him.

Movement Choir choreographed by Sam at LInC Summer School in 2000

The Summer School run by the Art of Movement Studio was threatened when there was great change in the management of the Studio and, in order to preserve this wonderful experience, Sam and Susi took over the management of the Summer School, with Lisa Ullmann being Artistic Director until her death in 1984 when Sam took on

this role. This international event was a place of high creative endeavour, as so many of you will remember. We lived as a vibrant community, returning year after year for 30 years until 2009. So many emails and cards have come from people inspired by working with him, feeling their lives were changed from their experiences of dancing in his choirs. They have used terms like 'inspirational', 'extraordinary', 'a friend', 'a privilege to have known him', 'he taught me so much', 'a high spot of my year'. It was a time of forming deep, meaningful friendships, a time for huge creative development, a real 'here and now' experience, which people told us they needed to get them through life till the next year. Sam appreciated his part in this but knew that the magic happened each year because of wonderful staff members - all of whom have sent their condolences and sense of loss: Anna, Hilary, Jan, John, Maggie, Mitch, Richard, Rosie, Su with David McKittrick; Geraldine, Hen, Henry, and Lisa have greeted him with a twirl on the Other Side. And his work lives on in the Laban Movement Choir Project run by Janet, Maggie and Susi.

Sam travelled with his gifts to Austria, Denmark, Germany, Holland, Norway and Switzerland taking his understanding and love of movement to new and experienced dancers.

Later in life Sam trained as an educational counsellor and is fondly remembered by the whole group as a vibrant, very intelligent, and humorous group member. He also developed his skills in creative writing which then led to facilitating a creative writing group for over ten years. A piece of his that was read at his funeral is:

November closes its hand
on the end of the year.
There is ice on cars
and on the lake.
Wild-fowl and sea-birds land
in lumps of wings and outstretched necks.
They stand, preen, gather in clumps
and nod to deny such indignity.
Bonfires smudge, then blaze as rockets hit the sky.
Memories of treachery still live.

At his funeral we began with *Misa Criolla* and finished with "In Trutina" from *Carmina Burana* . . . many will remember how we all stood in a huge circle with arms around each other . . . gently swaying from one side to the other in full awareness of everyone in the circle. That is how Sam would like us to be with him, holding on, smiling, Being.

Sam - LInC entertainment

Members' Classes

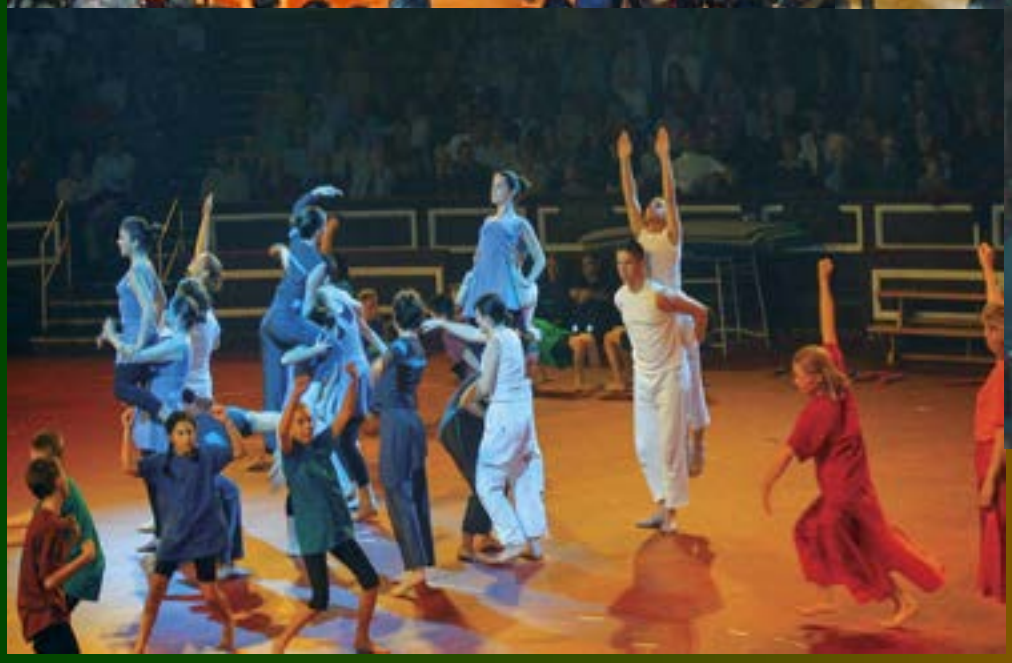
Due to Covid 19 physical classes are not possible. Contact the members below as they may be offering on-line classes.

Adult Movement and Dance in Belfast
Contact: **Brenda McKee**
Email: brendamckee@btinternet.com

'Third Age Dance' in Cambridge
Contact: **Maddy Tongue**
01223 302030

Weekly Drop in Classes
led by Viv Bridson
Held at The Place which is due to open in September

Weekly Workshops
led by Jenny Frankel
Contact: 07970 536643
Email: jennyfrankel.laban@gmail.com



Michael Platt's 200 children and young people in the PEAUK Royal Albert Hall Spectacular in 1999

Caroline Mummery's Group in the CCPR 70th Anniversary celebration at the Royal Albert Hall in 2005