

Movement, Dance & Drama



Images from Anna Carlisle's 2014 Laban Lecture
Choric Art: Charting the History of the Movement Choir



Group of dancers, c. 1925 (L/F/1/111). From the Rudolf Laban Archive,
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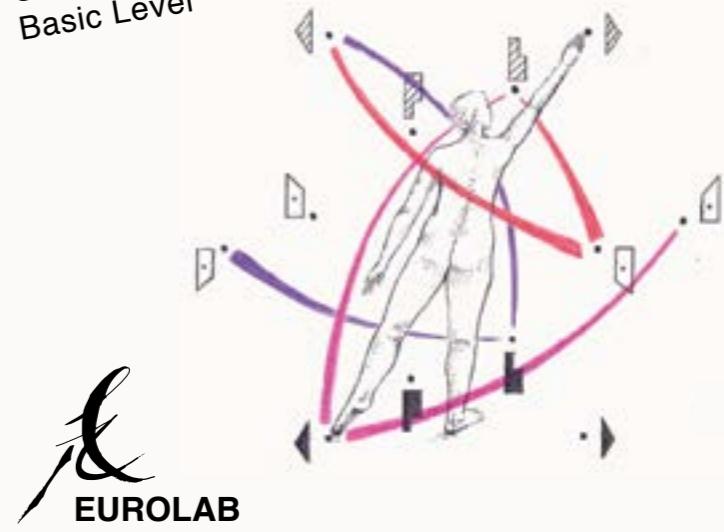
Editorial

There is a lot of talk at the moment about 'the new normal', usually in reference to recovery from the COVID pandemic, but the phrase may equally be applied to the developments in the organisation of the Laban Guild; as we become accustomed to the changes the 'new normal' will just be 'normal'.

In terms of the magazine, for the rest of this year, things will remain as the 'old' normal, that is, copy for the next edition needs submitting by September 15th. As I so often do I urge all of you to consider sending something for inclusion. That could be reflections on your Laban training (see in this issue Dorothy Ledgard's memories of Sheila McGivering's teaching, for example) or your application of Laban's thinking in your own work (see Beth Loughran's article in which she shares her practice). If you have been watching dance on-line over the lockdowns of the past year why not send a review of something that interested you, or perhaps you have read something Laban-related that might be interesting to others? I look forward to hearing from you.

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Laban Guild International

or dissolution. All Council members present agreed that the online proposal was the most feasible and effective way forward. A follow-up paper was sent to all members in April with details of the proposals.

Subsequently a great deal of correspondence was received from Guild members, and working parties were set up to discuss online aspects and the idea of 'Hubs' - such as the Movement Choir Project. A virtual AGM meeting was held on 21st March 2021 and voting resulted in the acceptance of Laban Guild International as an online, umbrella organisation, with Subscribers and Hubs.

Council felt that all Guild members had been given opportunities to express their views and would like to thank all those members who contributed to the discussions. The new Committee, consisting of four Trustees and two Consultants, is moving forward with the implementation of Laban Guild International.

Going forward

The website (www.labanguildinternational.org.uk) and our Facebook account have both been updated with the new name.

We anticipate that those groups wishing to become Hubs, under Laban Guild International, will contact us with a named co-ordinator.

Official Launch of Laban Guild International

International Dance Day, 29th April

Darren Royston reports:

April 29th was the date determined as the UNESCO International Dance Day, and on this day this year, 2021, we decided to officially launch the newly named Laban Guild International. There are many reasons why this seemed appropriate: the historical connections of the past; the global political vision for the future; and the fact that the Laban Movement Choir Project was leading an actual event on this day, therefore demonstrating that this was a 'hub' working in practice now.

I am writing this article to give an historical context, to consider what is happening now, and to think how things could develop in the future with this new focus as Laban Guild International. I am bringing together writings, comments, reviews, and suggestions from some of the participants from the Day of Dance, with the hope that this will encourage others to join, to respond and to maybe create their own artistic projects and form hubs linking to Laban Guild International.

Dance Day is on the 29th April each year because, on this day in 1727, Jean-Georges Noverre was born. Noverre is credited with creating the idea of dramatic dance, that is incorporating physical and emotional expression of character into theatre dance. It is even more appropriate for us as Noverre's writings were also an influence on Rudolf Laban's approach to performances by Movement Choirs.

In Valerie Preston-Dunlop's biography *Rudolf Laban, An Extraordinary Life*, she identifies that Rudolf Laban liked to "work as part of an ongoing dance history", seeing his works as a "natural development" from concepts established by earlier dance thinkers (p. 109). Laban openly spoke of how his ideas of dramatic dance interpreted the theories of Jean-Georges Noverre, which he had studied and began exploring in practice with Movement Choirs in the 1920s; Laban "saw himself as a reformer but following in the traditions of the innovative dancing masters Jean-Gerorges Noverre and Gaspero Angiolini" (ibid., p. 116). Thus, ideas from Noverre were identified specifically in a dance version of Mozart's *Les Petit Riens* and the ideas of embodied characters in *Agamemnons Tod* performed by the Hamburg Movement Choir. By 1924, there were twelve Movement Choirs in operation, situated in Vienna, Lübeck, Berne, Budapest and major towns throughout Germany.

Implementation of the additional 'Movement Dance & Drama' copies and Subscribers' system will not start until 1st January 2022, the start of our financial year.

These first choreric projects followed Laban's own guide 'The Idea of a Movement Choir' which explained the value of using professional soloists leading groups of amateurs. This idea was influenced by the way singers were combined in cantata performances: professional soloists with a community choir. Laban saw this structure as "a possible way of performing in the future, for both artistic and financial reasons" (ibid., p. 98). As Preston-Dunlop explains, Laban's first lecture-demonstration, for the Hamburg Movement Choir, gave his philosophical reasons:

He addressed first his concept that contemporary physical culture needed to be artistic; the movement choir was the form of art proposed, with its central aim of a **festive, joyous dance experience**. He supported this proposal by citing the longing within physical culture circles for a healthy, strong and lasting foundation for their work with a bodily, spiritual and mental basis. His stand was clearly put that recreation is achieved through a **creative, artistic, integrated experience shared with other people**. (ibid., p. 97)

Laban would continue supporting projects that were developments of these Movement Choirs throughout his career, eventually creating groups in post-war Britain. These projects connected professional performers with amateur groups from the community. Laban's last choreric dance work was a Saltata (the dance equivalent to a cantata), performed in March 1955 at Wembley Stadium in a Festival of Movement and Dance. As other movement choirs before and after, this project used popular music (Bizet's *L'Arlesienne Suite*) and included many different groups (such as the Women's League of Health and Beauty). Even this late work of Laban showed that "choreric movement as an art was clearly visible in this harmonious work" (ibid., p. 267). As we now consider the event that occurred on Dance Day 2021, it seems clear that The Movement Choir still holds this same aim, inviting anyone interested to perform and find "a balance to the mechanisation of working life" (ibid., p. 104).

The Online ZOOM event in 2021 was opened with an address from Penelope Boff, who made the official link to the UNESCO International Dance Council, joining online from Spain. Alongside her professional

work as a dancer and teacher of ballet, Penelope is an active member of UNESCO International Dance Council, organising several international events in Spain, the World Dance Congress in London and dance workshops in Athens: she has always believed in the global power of dance. As part of the European Association of Dance Historians, Penelope has presented conference papers at Seville's Dance Conservatory and Queen's University Belfast and was part of the conference on *Laban for the 21st Century* in Bratislava. For a number of years, Penelope has been the Laban Guild International Liaison Officer and Regional Representative for Scotland, and many of you will remember her from recent Laban Guild Summer Schools, when she assisted Susi.

Penelope's welcome from UNESCO passed on the words from the President of the International Dance Council, Prof. Dr. Alkis Raftis, acknowledging that dance can be good for the spiritual well-being of us all, particularly at this time of lockdown, curfew and physical restrictions. This was to be the theme of the Movement Choir: hopefulness and how our movement, as a group, could be inspired creatively by feelings and fears experienced during the pandemic situation. Above all, the concept of the Dance Day, and of UNESCO itself, is that the world can unite. Penelope ended her introduction with this thought, that the "now" will take us into the future:

Dance will give us the means whereby we can reach out once more to others and to our many communities. Today there are many people from all around the globe who will be dancing together in honour of this very special day. It is delightful that we can join in with them.

Susi Thornton is best placed to give us a history of how this specific **Laban Movement Choir Project** came into being.

Susi Thornton writes:
The Laban Movement Choir Project (LMCP) came into being in 2011 after the closure of the Laban International Courses (LinC) annual Summer School. A very important part of each of these Courses was what was called 'the movement choir' directed by Sam Thornton who had been a Senior Lecturer at the Art of Movement Studio after he moved there from Bretton Hall. His choirs were ways for all members of the Course to come together and move to his theme. With sessions throughout the week, the choir came together on the last morning; good friends would travel to Dartford, Brighton or Eastbourne to join for the final part of the choir feeling a part of this amazing experience - people reading this, who have been part of LinC, will remember their favourite choirs.

LMCP followed a similar pattern to the organisation of Sam's choirs, which had a connection to, but were dissimilar from, what we read about Rudolf Laban's movement choirs. Sam's choirs were not for performance: there was taught work but also much opportunity for small and larger groups to create their own material together. When LinC came to a close it felt very important not to lose these opportunities of dancing together in the way of a 'choir'. Sam and Susi, with Wendy Hermelin, set up a training programme to look at the various aspects of this kind of dance; Days of Dance were arranged for these trainees to 'cut their teeth' in real experience, and so it continued. Time moved on, participants in the training programme moved on, and LMCP is now organised by Maggie Killingbeck, Janet Lunn and Susi Thornton.

When restrictions to meet physically were imposed in 2020, it was decided to set up four Virtual Dance half days, which have been very successful. Numbers were restricted to around 16 – 20 so that everyone could be seen on the ZOOM screen. You will hear from some of the participants later, including those in the the UNESCO International Day of Dance. We are in the process of designing the next one, to be held in July 2021, with the theme of "Water," to link to the Global Water Dance movement.

The Laban Movement Choir Project is now an active 'hub' of the newly formed Laban Guild International. We have experience of running 'Dance in a Day' events held in Virginia Water, we have travelled to Devon, to Hitchin, to Cambridge, to Belfast, and we are happy to set up a 'Dance in a Day' anywhere that can offer a minimum of 12 dancers - we have no cut off for numbers of participants.

As a Hub we are happy to have people join us: to be on our mailing list; to help us set up our Days in their part of the world (when we can resume face to face); to assist us with technology for virtual sessions which can continue to reach people in different parts of the world; or to come and have training in this form of dance work in order for them to be able to keep promoting this wonderful way of dancing.

Darren Royston continues:
It was at Laban Guild events that I first experienced Movement Choirs, including at Dancing Together sessions as part of Summer Courses and Annual General Meetings. I even assisted Susi at one Dance Day, giving an historical dance workshop on "farandole" chain-dances based on medieval pictures, which were then developed and explored with the Laban-concept theme of that project. The recent Virtual Movement Choir was a very different experience, however. As Zoom was used to link us all there was no dance studio, no physical contact, we were not even in the same room, and for me, not even the same time zone, as I am here in Bangkok.

It was a truly “international” event and required real focus to stay connected and feel we were all producing one choreric art.

I will let the responses from other participants give a fuller picture of the event, but it is clear that the Laban Movement Choir Project supports the aims of the Laban Guild International charity: promoting the art of movement and dance following the concepts of Rudolf Laban. Laban’s concepts explored in the recent choir were elements of choreutics and eukinetics - embodying the three planes (door, table, wheel), metric musical structures (unison and counterpoint), labile diagonals (open and crossed in the dynamosphere), spatial scaffolding (using the 3-ring), contrasting effort qualities (considering connections to the elements, the flow from bound to free movement to be expressive), and choreographic tasks requiring us to select different parts of the body to initiate movement, and share the same fundamental principles.

To create the piece, the facilitators (Susi Thornton, Maggie Killingbeck, Janet Lunn) were professional demonstrators, each taking responsibility for one section each. Break-out rooms put us into partners (I met someone I had not met in person before), and into smaller groups (again new people). These groups then were brought together into the larger group. To hold the piece together we were reminded to keep in mind ‘the story’ and as we practised the sequence, the joy came from moving as a sequence from one discipline to another. As I became more familiar with the choreographic material, I developed my performance energies for each section, and it was possible to feel more of a connection to the others on the screen in front of me. I began to experience moments of harmony in the physical space where I was creating a new energy (I had never danced wildly in this studio apartment and, although I was warned by Susi in the warm-up to watch out for hazards in the room, when I got over-confident in the final performance I did have a collision with my electric fan overhead - a reminder to always keep spatially aware even when you give your all in the final performance). Above all, the final performance felt as if we were united to the theme and the concepts behind the moves we were all making – even if each person had interpreted things in their own style, with their own technique and in total isolation.

There is a clear awareness that Movement Choir projects must make things relevant for the participants, in the themes being explored, in the use of technology to advance ways to engage with others, and by using the art of movement as the shared material. These comments from other participants at 2021 Dance Day reveal how successful it was in doing this:

Monika Ptasinska, RDMP (Registered Dance Movement Psychotherapist) and Dance Fitness Instructor

I attended the Laban Guild virtual workshop focusing on the celebration of the international dance day led by Maggie, Susi and Janet. They created creative space for us on Zoom and I really felt a part of it, even if it was virtual. Focusing on the creating phrases, learning the movement material, working in the breakout rooms and learning from each other, I really felt connected with the theme of new hope. I loved the interactions, the small screens moving in front of me within the theme. There was a movement for finding my flow, changing the time, moving within the planes, and creating the three Rings. I really felt being connected to the inner and outer space. After the session I felt that we had created something together, moving together in different time-zones and geographical places.

Helena Softley Eden

I can’t 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’s rarely about performing to others, (although I have been part of a group that performed to a handful once) it’s all about the joy of dancing for yourself and with others.

Pauline Cockburn

The movement choir held on International Dance Day was a truly international virtual event, something that probably wouldn’t have happened before Lockdown. I particularly enjoyed the use of throwing ourselves into the diagonals as we set ourselves free from the confines of our homes. Working in zoom break out rooms is always a joy, not only to share movement ideas but a great time to catch up and meet new Laban admirers.

Jackie Richards

Thank you so much for a very enjoyable Movement Choir on Thursday. I really felt I had used my whole being dancing. Laban Choirs led by Maggie, Susie and Janet really are enjoyable and by the end a whole dance evolved. Everyone learnt a series of tasks and created and interpreted these in their own ways. You really feel you have danced and expressed yourself. Although we were all on our own dancing through Zoom there was a real sense of connectedness and dancing together. The presenters were very experienced dance facilitators, and all instructions were clear and communicated with humour, wit, warmth and sincerity. They had obviously carefully prepared and knew what they wished to achieve, and they definitely excelled themselves. There were also good opportunities to get to know the other dancers too.

Helena Softley Eden gives a full review of the event On Thursday 29th April it was my pleasure to be a part of the celebrations on International Dance day

by participating in a virtual Zoom dance arranged by the Laban Movement Dance Project. The theme for this delightful dance/movement piece was ‘Hope’ and was choreographed and led by Maggie Killingbeck, Susi Thornton and Janet Lunn.

Each section of the dance represented the events and experiences of this last year, through movement incorporating Laban fundamentals. We moved to ‘Appalachian Spring VII Doppio movimento’ by Aaron Copland (the section that many will recognise as ‘The Lord of The Dance’). Some of the movement was ‘set’ but we were encouraged to improvise and create at several points throughout the piece. We began by depicting Spring – walking in meadows, appreciating new growth, birdsong, sunshine. We were encouraged to devise a short phrase based on those themes which we danced ourselves, then we teamed up with a partner (who we had met in the breakout rooms) and incorporated each other’s ideas into a longer phrase. This represented one of the few benefits of lockdown – being in nature.

We also linked up with three or four others (again via break out rooms) and choreographed some movements in the planes, that we did in unison. Each group danced in a different plane and this represented forming groups with like-minded people and connecting with others via Zoom calls and other technologies commonly used in this last year. We then had a few bars of music where we moved around quickly, rushing back and forth as if dashing off excitedly to get our first and second vaccinations. This then led to our unbridled joy at the possibility of Covid restrictions being relaxed and we threw ourselves into that mood by working with the diagonals in an exuberant way. We then realised that we still had to be careful, so our movements became slower, binding our flow and becoming more reflective. We all danced in unison for the last section of the dance – finding harmony through the quality of a three ring, reaching out to each other and culminating in opening our arms to the screen and therefore each other, in a virtual embrace.

We have all had to endure the challenges of the last year and dancing together in this way really felt like it was a group experience, where we could support each other and reach out to each other across the airwaves. The final embrace (pictured) was an emotional moment for me and felt almost as good as being in the same room with everybody. With luck that will become a reality in the not too distant future.

It truly was a marvellous way to celebrate International Dance Day and my thanks goes out to Susi, Janet and Maggie for creating such a powerful and poignant piece. Even though we were all dancing in our own homes it really felt like we were connected. The feeling I believe we were all left with was hopefulness for the future. It was a truly uplifting

experience, and I look forward to the next one.

Darren Royston continues

A model for future Laban Guild International Hubs

It was so fortuitous that this Movement Choir event was on International Dance Day when we were able to officially launch Laban Guild International. This was an example of how a group could operate autonomously, use the network of the Guild, be supported from the social media and website, and connect to more participants. It is also wonderful to get responses from participants, photo material and examples of how to create a movement choir, and suggestions of how to take Laban’s ideas into new directions. Some participants suggested that the topical themes and narratives for the Movement Choir could also use a variety of music, other dance styles, and attract diverse groups, both young and old. It is clear that Laban’s principles are still relevant for this type of work. Join the Hub and give your own suggestions to make a difference.

An Invitation to form Hubs from the Trustees of Laban Guild International

There is clearly a need to keep thinking about the future and to continue moving on. When we were in discussion of the way things could work to be manageable with the current Council, Susi proposed the use of the word ‘hubs’ and began to suggest many other areas that could be developed, by people coming together and forming groups with their independent purpose. As Susi Thornton says: “It is hoped this new structure will attract new people from UK and abroad to join HUBS of their choice. People will work together to develop and promote the aspects of Laban based movement/dance that interests them, creating events, workshops, forums, training, performance and keeping information flowing to the Trustees in their role of supporting and promoting.”

□ **Sesame Laban Guild Together** is another organisation that has started to run workshops and operate independently as a hub to unite those working in “well-being” combining therapy, psychological and emotional healing.

□ Those professional practitioners working in **theatre, drama and movement directing** are in discussion about events that will share experiences of using Laban’s ideas in training actors, opera singers and choreography in plays and films.

□ The online network, with website updates and e-flash, allow teachers leading classes to list classes, courses and workshops. These platforms can be used for people to suggest

ways to connect and share ideas which connect to Rudolf Laban's work.

As a subscriber to Laban Guild International, you can decide which hubs you wish to belong to and generate your own projects.

Our Professional Future with UNESCO International Dance Council

Laban Guild International is becoming an official member of the UNESCO International Dance Council. The mutual benefit of the two organisations is clear: to promote high quality events that bring all those around the world into contact with dance and movement. Interestingly Laban's student, Kurt Jooss, was part of the first UNESCO International Dance Council in 1973. Over the years since then, many events and discussions have centred around ideas originally proposed by Rudolf Laban, including

Sharing my practice and research in higher education: 'universal soul', my university role and context

Beth Loughran

Reflecting as a university lecturer in dance and movement, it is apparent that the parts of Laban's work to which I am most drawn, are his visionary perspectives of corporeality, expressionism, and embodied wisdom. I currently think and enquire into the world of embodied knowledge and lived experience and consider where it exists and what its uses are. I investigate dance as a non-verbal knowledge form in its first instance with Laban's 'land of silence' concept providing robust framing for this. 'Laban believed in the existence of two worlds - the world of everyday appearance (the space of action) and the world of an unseen higher order (the space of silence)' (Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez Colberg, 2002, p. 26) and in his autobiography he states that: 'Behind external events the dancer perceives another, entirely different, world [...] a hidden, forgotten landscape lies there, the land of silence, the realm of the soul' (Laban, 1975, pp. 89-90). In my role as a thinking dancer and educator in higher education, I interact with these ideas in my practice which involves consideration of community, learning, knowledge and sharing.

As a lecturer, I am responsible for fostering fair and equal learning environments and am captivated by what might be discovered and learned from accessing those hidden and forgotten landscapes of silence, located in the lived, embodied experience. I teach and facilitate content and practice around performance-making and critical thinking, engaging energetically with questions around social and cultural perspectives. Uniting all of this in my higher

notation, systematic movement training and the link between professional performers and the members of the community.

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education context is, it feels to me, a question of knowledge and how it is generated, discovered, acquired and shared. The question can come from a variety of viewpoints such as: what and how much knowledge is gained in the face of the financial investment made to get it? How does performance, in particular dance, 'count as' research or knowledge? And what place do canons of knowledge and fixity of knowledge have in relation to marginalised or unacknowledged contributions throughout human history? Direct and physicalised demonstrations of longstanding racial inequality and marginalisation called society to action on a global scale during the summer of 2020. The collective urge of the Black Lives Matter protests last year, sparked initially by George Floyd's death in Minneapolis, 25 May 2020, were an embodied means to break through historical silencing and oppression, to convey a vital message for change. I consider myself called to action and continue to build my practice around dance and social justice and hold closely Laban's philosophy, of a 'universal soul out of which and for which we have to create' (Laban, 1975, p. 94) more urgently than ever in my navigation of knowledge and its communities.

Dance and the embodied as epistemology:

A thinking example

In response to the call to action of 2020, I propose that Laban's concept of 'the space of silence', in relation to 'the space of action', offers a way to access insight into cultural occurrences such as protest, that like art forms such as dance, film or

music, are 'time-based' and embodied. Thinking epistemologically, I perceive that Laban's visions, and the dance paradigm overall, are such that they can effectively deal with questions of culture, identity and lived experience. As a promoter of my academic subject area, I am compelled to explore the beneficial possibilities of how widely the characteristics of this way of knowing, could transfer to, or combine with other subjects. I imagine how knowledge practices are nourished and kept alive, in order that new shoots of tradition cultivate and flourish.

In the dance paradigm - whether public, professional or academic - performance, discussion, artistic statement, representation, expression, body politics and creativity are typical means for knowledge discovery and exchange among diverse communities worldwide. These cultural methods and modes importantly locate and voice individual perspectives of people and communities, the presence of individual truths, provide a relational and felt possibilities to the experience of those receiving and engaging with the knowledge. In this way, through active and embodied listening, a delta like network of solidarity can emerge as a response to the sharing of knowledge, capable of supporting a busy cosmos of diversity, as opposed to the singular conditions of one mainstream with its hinterlands. Through the embodied means of dance, the mainstream of spoken and written languages, is initially transcended, as the hinterlands of experiential and qualitative experiences are foregrounded; the lost or hidden dimensions of knowledge, if desired, can form into new channels of consciousness and possibility.

How is the dance, the research? In a dissemination, readers and audiences of the research discoveries can be awakened to their own senses and lived experiences through their active participation in what is being shared. In Roland Barthes' essay *The Death of the Author*, the idea he sees 'as ushering in an era of joyous freedom', that gives way to the active reader being born (Barry, 2002, p. 67), conceptually connects to my pursuit of continued advocacy for practice and participation as an effective method for learning and sharing knowledge. Thinking further about the interactive and involved culture of knowledge transmission, Tyson Yunkaporta, a member of the Apalech Clan in far North Queensland, in his book *Sands Talk*, explains 'kinship-mind', a concept taken from his writing method and envisioned thinking. It is represented by a drawn symbol - two dots with a horizontal line between the two.

The kinship-mind symbol shows the connectedness between two things – places or people or knowledge or any combination of these [...] In Aboriginal worldviews, relationships are paramount in knowledge transmission. [...] In our world nothing can be known or even exist unless it is in relation

to other things. Most importantly, those things that are connected are less important than the forces of connection between them. [...] Areas of knowledge are integrated, not separated. The relationship between the knower and other knowers, place and senior knowledge-keepers is paramount. It facilitates shared memory and sustainable knowledge systems. Any observer does not try to be objective, but is integrated within a sentient system that is observing itself. (Yunkaporta, 2018, pp. 168-170)

Yunkaporta here conveys his indigenous perspective of the ethos of how knowledge is held interactively in his culture, rather than a finalistic transactional exchange or transmission. This is useful to my question about knowledge in higher education and the aspect of handling of the relationship between financial investment and knowledge gain. Laban's concepts of embodied wisdom also depict ways of knowing that reside in the inner unseen human world, demanding active participation to receive and become aware of information available from an experience. The 'bodies in space' feeling of Yunkaporta's kinship-mind symbol - that represents the connectedness between two things - brings vision to a way that dance provides a scenario where the reader, spectator, or listener, for example, has an active and sensory role to carry out, the joys and freedoms of which, Barthes demonstrates as possible.

The space of action and of silence:

A thinking example in practice

Here, I have considered three memorable, physicalised moments of the 2020 Black Lives Matter occurrences. I think and write about spaces, actions and silences under headings that aim to keep present the paradigm of dance in the discussion of it as an epistemology capable of reflecting culture, politics and experiences. In Preston-Dunlop & Sanchez Colberg (2002, p. 220), Paula Salosaari shares her research on 'the concept of multiple embodiment'. She demonstrates a shift of possibility in the performance of ballet, from fixed and concerned with the reproduction of traditions to creative and experiential. The dancer is discussed as a cultural agent of change in this research that acknowledges the lived experience of those participating in its performance and institution. Salosaari's findings here provide a key example of how dance and its practice have tangibility as a site with fertile ground for the development of knowledge and makes space for the possibility of cultural understanding.

In the street

Demonstration protests, like dance, are frequently described as ephemeral, temporal and corporeal. The 2020 racial injustice happenings, along with the ensuing global protest responses, are accessible now only in the documentation and viscerally felt

impressions and memories of participants and onlookers (space of silence). The influence of it all still streams in the continuing discourse and influence of this global campaign for racial equality. The 'action' taken by many worldwide to gather en masse and protest in the streets, overrode fears of a pandemic virus where the message of injustice was simply too urgent, with either prospect demonstrably posing a threat to life. Actions speaking louder than words. Stand up and be counted. Stand as one. Be there.

Reverence

'Taking the Knee', a gesture of silent and respectful protest with a long and rich political history, was and is still now performed in many contexts - particularly sport, where there have been significant examples. Silently, from an individual performer, the action communicates deep and detailed political statement within itself and when performed collectively, solidarity can also be signaled across diverse groups in society. Communities are nurtured and society influenced.

Taking the space

People came together to topple and deface statues worldwide; statues that gave recognition to individual figures in society for good that had been done – good that had been done for some groups, but that had come at great human cost and atrocity to others. The example of Edward Colston's statue (Bristol, UK) long contested for its representation of truths and realities unacknowledged over time, is a reminder of vast information locked away from access or action. Raised fist gestures all around, signaled the meaning and reason for taking down of the artefact and evoked an array of thought and feeling on histories, experiences, and injustices. The embodied strategy, all round, was the most natural and effective way to respond to the situation, with urgency and universality.

The sculpture *A Surge of Power*, Jen Reid (2020) by Marc Quinn, to me, represents both spaces of action and spaces of silence. I notice a sequence of the demonstrators' removal and transportation of Edward Colston's statue to spatially dispose of it (space of action), to a momentarily but highly resonant and energetic empty space on the plinth (space of silence), to then what appears as a breaking through of the oppressive silence in an expressive, sculptured representation of an individual figure taking the space anew. Quinn's sculpture here embodies the 2020 BLM message through the performed bodily expression of Bristol protester, Jen Reid with a rooted wide stance, the black-power fist punched to the air (spaces of action/silence).

Moving on into action

The epistemological field of dance encompasses and covers hugely diverse areas of knowledge including, but not limited to, philosophy, history, culture, health,

social development, community and equality. In my context, I consider how the various online petitions that call to save undergraduate dance programmes from closure might be evidence of a detrimental effect of the reported low take-up of dance subjects at school level. One Dance UK's web article by Claire Somerville, *Charting the Decline of Arts in Schools - Looking Ahead* (January 2018), shows how dance and creative arts, as academic subjects, provoke doubts and divisions around worth and value within education at school level. Another One Dance UK feature published a year later, reports figures of students taking GSCE dance finally rising again in 2019, after several years of previous continuing decline (One Dance UK, 2019).

In concluding my thoughts and response to the question of how I apply Laban's principles in my role in higher education, I wonder about the effects of names and titles and if 'dance' is misleading, off-putting or culturally exclusive. For me then, I next think of epistemological review work of the subject area to question the role of language and terminology and what might be constituted or obscured in relationship to the realities and details of this spatially and bodily, universal site for knowledge. Could such consideration put the subject area's powers into a new light of visibility in the academy, to save it from becoming 'lost' or 'hidden'? Laban himself states that 'it is almost impossible to find a name' for the energy behind the occurrences and material things found in the 'other world' that a participant of dance can encounter (Laban, 1975, p. 89).

I notice and feel how dance is sometimes a part of life that can be picked up and put down by not only the academy but also societal culture more widely. For some however, dance and other forms of embodied culture - from collective expressions of joy and consolation to perpetuating violence – remain a constantly flowing river of reality and experience. As Salosaari described, a dancer, concerned with the act of embodiment, can function as a 'a cultural agent of change' and this links to the 'phase of permanent revolution' that cultural theorist Stuart Hall refers to when commenting on Britain's multicultural society (J T, 2015). Surely, acquiring perspective and practice in embodied and cultural modes builds towards universal graduate attributes, no matter what the subject of study? An applied and experienced practice of equality and diversity, a global perspective and cultural perception as a key literacy are essentials to advocate for in the delivery of higher education.

Laban's systems offer ways into developing these ideas, integrally encouraging exploration and evolution as a philosophy through the physical experience, whether in a dance specialist setting or otherwise. My reflections on the 2020 Black Lives Matter uprisings aim to show the centrality and

universality of the physical and embodied knowledge as arguably one of our most powerful tools for working together as a community of global citizens on a diverse range of societal tasks and projects. In a post-2020 world, this is something which carries new possibilities and verve, amid the spatially cosmic effects on the evolution of our lived realities.

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Sheila Mary McGivering 16th May 1928 to 16th April 2021

Tributes from Guild members

Born in Bebington, Cheshire, Sheila described her early childhood as idyllic. It was interrupted by the second world war and she was evacuated to Carlisle where she attended the City grammar school. She first came in to contact with dance as a student at Homerton College, Cambridge, where her lecturer was Betty Meredith Jones. At that point there were not many people involved in dance so when she started her career as a teacher an advisor immediately realised that here was a great opportunity, and so grabbed her and Sheila quickly found herself teaching dance.

Sheila felt that she was still a little unsure of her abilities and so went out and bought a book to help her in her preparation. The book was *Modern Educational Dance* by Rudolf Laban. Inspired by this she went on a Summer School at Dartington Hall in Devon, and then on a weekend course in Wolverhampton. At these she met Rudolf Laban, Lisa Ullmann, and Warren Lamb. It was Warren who, over dinner at Wolverhampton said, "Why don't you go to the Studio?" Sheila was given a year's unpaid leave and went to study at the Laban Art of Movement Studio in Manchester. In those days there were no CD players, or tape recorders; someone was needed to wind up the gramophone. If you were wise, she advised, you bought two recordings of the piece you were to use; one to wear out in rehearsal, and one for the performance.

During her year at the Studio she did movement every day, except Saturday mornings, which were devoted to music and structured function with Geraldine Stephenson. Most of the work was practical with preparation often done in the evenings. Geraldine was responsible for daily training and dance drama - Sheila thought Geraldine's work was brilliant. Amongst the teachers who came to lecture was Albrecht Knust, who taught notation.



Sheila and Geraldine enjoying the LInC Laban Guild millennium celebration

After her year in Manchester, Sheila went to work in Stratford, where she taught PE with dance for three years. Then she decided that she needed to broaden her horizons so went to teach in a Secondary Modern School in Manchester. Here she was responsible for general teaching and for Drama. During the ten years that she was at the school, Sheila also took evening classes in Bolton and Manchester and was a member of the Manchester Dance Circle led by Sylvia Bodmer. By the time she left the school she was also responsible for RE and for the GCE exams throughout the school. Later, she was deputy headteacher at a boarding school before

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joining Eaton Hall College in Retford as a lecturer in dance and drama where she taught until it closed in 1980. During this time, she completed a Diploma in RE and gained an Advanced Dip.Ed. at the Laban Centre/Goldsmiths' in 1975.

Sheila worked with the Guild for a long time, having joined in 1949. She was involved in the Laban Guild training courses for many years and was deeply concerned with tutor training. She served twice as a member of Council before succeeding Joan Russell as Chairman, a position which she held for six years and something she felt was a great honour. Her only comment on her time as Chair was "At least under my chairmanship it didn't pack up!" Sheila was then invited to become Honorary Vice-President.

A personal memory – Ann Ward

I first met Sheila around 1985, when she was Chair of the Laban Guild. Following the 1986 AGM, when the Guild was going through one of its recurrent crises, Sheila asked me if I would consider becoming administrator for the Guild. I offered to take on the role of Membership Secretary which I could do while living in Northern Ireland. At the same time Sheila recruited Pam Anderton as Treasurer and we have worked closely together ever since. I loved the role, which I held until 2006, as I felt I knew almost all of the Guild members personally, so I am happy to return to it.

But it was through the Training Committee that I got to know Sheila. I started organising Laban courses in Ireland and Sheila was a Moderator for the Laban Guild Creative Dance Leaders training scheme. Her knowledge and experience were immense, but she was equally interested in the people being taught. She was endlessly encouraging and supportive to both students and staff. We all learned so much from her, but what is more, we got to know her and enjoyed her company as a valued friend.

She was very practical and could always bring us down to earth, particularly with her dry sense of humour, which could diffuse any situation. She would always bring us back to what Laban himself had taught, whilst considering the needs of every individual student and still supporting us in our own roles. After hours, relaxing over a meal with a glass of red wine, she was always excellent company.



Gordon Curl, Maggie Killingbeck, Sheila McGivering and Christine Long enjoying lunch at a Guild AGM

magazines, Sheila said "If I fall under a bus, don't bother!" That was typical of Sheila. So, to so many of us, Sheila was a guide, mentor, inspiration, team member - but most of all, a friend. She will be sadly missed but will always stay in our hearts - and in our minds whenever we are working. If in doubt, we ask ourselves - what would Sheila say?

A personal memory – Dorothy Ledgard

It was in 1966, at Eaton Hall College of Higher Education, that I met Miss McGivering. Here I was studying to gain a Certificate in Education which would qualify me to teach PE in secondary schools. As part of the PE programme Sheila taught the dance syllabus. Few, if any, of the 18

Years ago, when working together in Dublin after there had been several obituaries in recent Guild

Sheila was very reticent about herself, but had a strong faith and, whenever on an assessment weekend, whether in Cork, Belfast, Wales or wherever, would quietly find a Church service she could attend on the Sunday. She was also committed to her own family and, as my granddaughter and Sheila's great nieces were not too far apart in ages, we shared many photos and stories.

students studying PE as their specialist subject had experience of dance in education so we didn't know what to make of the tall lady, dressed all in black - tights, leotard and flowing cape - who came striding into the gym calling out 'Good afternoon' then laughing and scanning us as we sat on the floor. Then, in a dance lesson, she demonstrated one of Laban's movement scales, filling her space enthusiastically while we watched keenly. Our initial attempts at copying the movement patterns challenged our flexibility, balance and concentration; Sheila was very encouraging, with a twinkle in her eyes, and kind in her comments, saying 'It will come' or words to that effect.

One day, when we weren't feeling motivated, we all lay on the floor, like 'sleeping lions', and did not respond to her as she entered the room. So, respecting our feelings, she walked through the spaces between us setting simple tasks to initiate movement which awakened the body and lifted the spirit. Soon we were on our feet and learning another movement scale.

Looking back, I realise that Sheila invested much of herself in her teaching and was always pleased to talk with us about our progress on the course.

Sheila and I - From Mentor to Friend - Uma O'Neill



In 1999 I met Sheila at her home in Chester. This first meeting was nerve wracking, I was a fresh faced 19 year-old and it came on the back of a telephone conversation that had almost scared the living daylights out of me. The call came about because I had applied to do the Laban Guild Dance Leaders Stage II course in Powys, not having done Stage 1. The Guild had suggested that if I studied the Stage I course content with Sheila I could attend the Stage II concurrently. On the phone I recall Sheila, in her extremely fine English, using phrases like "highly irregular situation" and inviting me to a "candidate assessment" and expressing her "concern" about the proposal.

Duly summoned, I arrived at her home; the sun

was shining, and I was anxious. After a strong handshake and a "How do you do?" I admitted that I was nervous and indicated I had a knot, with an absent-minded gesture, in my stomach. Seeing that Sheila asserted, "Ahh, you know where your centre is then," and smiled broadly. I think, looking back, that it was in that moment that she had already decided to take me on. Two years of weekly mentoring followed. I admitted to her years later that I would nod along and scribble furious notes but, at home, I would go over everything trying to get a grip of all the information she was providing. On occasions I would arrive to find she had cleared the dining room ready for practice. I clearly remember performing the dimensional cross, over and over again as she corrected each one slightly - stance, footwork, gesture, focus, body frame, clarity, nuance, feeling, intension. I do have the feeling that I probably studied the most in-depth Laban Guild Dance Leaders Stage 1 ever! I know exactly how lucky I am for that, and I am, to this day, hugely appreciative of all the effort Sheila put into nurturing me.

After the course was completed my visits continued for tea and cake. I loved it when she would tell me about her time at the Art of Movement Studio in Manchester with Laban and Lisa when she was a young student. We would discuss my teaching sessions or any complications that had arisen and Sheila would tell me about her experiences teaching children in schools. I remember complaining slightly about the children I was teaching in a session who could not stop running once they had started. Sheila looked at me sideways and asked me if I remembered what it was like to run as a child; the freedom, the feel of air on the skin, the joy it held. Let them run! I think it was during this period that I learned how to be responsive to my participants. Considering Sheila was already in her seventies at this point, her empathy, her understanding, her connection to her experiences was still vivid and present. I suppose our friendship could look oddly placed with more than fifty years separating us, but what is really so special about Laban's work is how it connects people, a really true, deep connection.

Sheila would take me to Guild events, and I know she was particularly pleased when Geraldine Stephenson picked me out of the crowd making a positive comment about "the one with the blue legs". I do not know exactly how much "championing" Sheila had done on my behalf but, I am forever indebted to the Guild for the opportunity to achieve my MA from Laban, London, through the first Scholarship programme, and later my in-depth study of Laban Principles through the Phoenix Project. In convincing me to take up the opportunity of the MA, Sheila had muttered things like "Well Gordon thinks..." and "Geraldine says...". Sheila was not an "I" person, but I do think she was extremely skilled

with dealing with people, with guiding situations, with inspiring others to act, much like a Shepherdess. As I think that, I can see Sheila gesturing with her hand, gathering, gliding, pushing, accompanied by various facial expressions. Sheila really could say so much without using words.

Although I was only in Sheila's life for her last twenty-two years, she has been a constant for my whole adulthood. She has been with me at so many important life events, equipping us with spare plates, pans and dishes when we moved into our first home, joining us at our wedding and Hari's Christening, travelling together to Guild events and even a jaunt to the Royal Albert Hall. Through the years there was a lot of cake, some wine, some sherry (especially at Christmas) but most of all tea and most often drank sitting at her table in the dining room overlooking her small courtyard garden. It was in this room that, once I had succeeded in my MA, Sheila had despondently said, "Well you're more qualified than me now," as if it was the end but, of course, it wasn't. And it did not stop her grilling me before I undertook teaching Effort on the Laban Guild Dance Leader's Stage I courses. She would pick apart my planning, drawing my attention to this, emphasising that, every time. She was always keen to hear my report on how it had gone and even more pleased to read the participants' feedback.

A few years ago (2018), I went for tea, fully prepared for the grilling. I began talking about it and Sheila just patted me on the hand. "You know what you're doing, pet!" After my teaching on this course the course-coordinator had said, "You have a really interesting teaching style. You come across as really laid back but then you don't let them get away with anything!" It reminded me of learning the dimensional cross all those years ago and possibly Sheila had rubbed off on me more than I had realised.

Somewhere along the line things changed - not our friendship, but it was I who made the pot of tea instead and did the washing up after. However you could never describe Sheila as a "little old lady"; to the very end Sheila was a strong, knowledgeable, witty, independent, adventurous, clever, kind, fun loving, caring and formidable woman. I have missed her very much this past year as COVID curtailed my visits, and I, as so many of us, will continue to miss her dearly. My Mentor. My Champion. My Friend.

"You must bring the children to have a go on my new gizmo. It's fantastic. They will love it." And they did.



Some memories of Sheila - Susi Thornton

I am travelling back in time to the 70's when the Leaders' Training Programmes began at the Laban Guild. A committee was formed to set standards and content of these programmes; Sheila was such a valuable member, her dry sense of humour keeping us in good spirits, and we had a lot of fun together. She had so much to share and we all worked well on this new venture. Sheila's contribution continued for many, many years.

At a personal level I remember things going a bit into disarray for me with Guild matters and Sheila's help and support in dealing with this was so sensible, so supportive, so comforting. She was very appreciative of the Laban International Summer School and Sam and I were grateful for her backing and support. She had a soft spot for Sam and he for her. Hopefully, he will be there to banter and dance with her in the heavenly dance space!

Sheila had a big presence, and it has been a privilege to know her.

Memories of Sheila - Pam Anderton

My first memory of Sheila was at an AGM in the mid 1980s when she had been told that I worked in a financial institution and asked me to take on the job of Treasurer. Not long after that Sheila also invited me to become Treasurer of the Lisa Ullmann Travelling Scholarship Fund of which she was a Patron and Minuting Secretary.

Since then I have met Sheila on many occasions; at LUTSF meetings, at Guild AGMs but most memorably in Chester and in Reigate, at Chester Zoo, Liverpool University botanic gardens, the Dee estuary at sunset, sorting out her Guild papers, and the Millennium Dome show.

Sheila, although a little intimidating initially, was a warm and empathetic friend. I feel very fortunate to have known her.

Report from the Secretary

Ann Ward

Members and Subscribers

Many thanks to our retiring membership secretary, Janet Harrison, for supporting Guild members and keeping the records over the last 12 years. Now we are moving over to subscription rather than membership; this will bring many benefits and simplify administration - full details are available on the website.

Long-term members may remember that I was membership secretary for 20 years from 1986 – 2006. I felt I knew most members personally, in fact many of them I did, and I really enjoyed the job. Now that the role of Courses Officer is receding, I am able to take this position up again and look forward to keeping in touch with all our members/subscribers as we move forward into the new online service, as well as reconnecting with past members and friends.

We are updating our Facebook and twitter accounts, and continuing with the eFlash service thanks to consultants Mary Painter and Jonathan Parr, and, thanks to Pam Anderton, greatly expanding our website. Do check out the new look website at: www.labanguildinternational.org.uk

Courses

With the changes in the organisation and in people's lifestyles, we shall be making changes to our provision of courses. The 30-hour Foundation Course in Laban-based Creative Dance will continue as now, but we are working with Maggie Killingbeck to extend this into a 50-hour Foundation Course in Laban Studies, that can also be delivered on-line. Maggie will be piloting this via zoom shortly and details will be on the web site.

The training committee - Janet Lunn, Arline Balmer, Noeleen McGrath and Ann Ward - will continue to look at opportunities for further development, continuing the work and legacy of Sheila McGivering, whose wise advice will be sorely missed.

I'm looking forward to our new future together you can contact me at any time at secretary@labanguildinternational.org.uk

Advertising Space

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Foundation Course in Laban Studies - Virtually

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- Engage with performance, composition and dance appreciation.
- Challenge your body and mind.

Zoom will provide the platform; remote relationships will be established through pinning others and working in breakout rooms.

Sessions will be 3 hours long Fridays 17.00 – 20.00 and Saturdays 10.00 – 13.00

Dates: June 18/19, 25/26, July 2/3, 9/10, 16/17, 23/24.

Personal study will be required.

If you are interested please contact Maggie Killingbeck: m.killingbeck@ntlworld.com

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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



Rudolf von Laban directing a movement choir rehearsal at Moreton Hall, Summer 1942 (L/F/3/46). From the Rudolf Laban Archive, University of Surrey,
© University of Surrey.



Finale of the LInC-Laban Guild millennium movement choir