

Movement, Dance & Drama



Laban Rio 2022



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

Editorial Team:
Dorothy Ledgard
Pam Anderton

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

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

Printing: Mickle Creative Solutions
30 Simmonds Road, Canterbury CT1 3RA
Phone: 01227 780001

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Email: DRLedgard@gmail.com

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Photographer:
Name: Cicero Pereira Rodrigues
Address: Rua Coelho Neto, 36 / APTO 502 B – Laranjeiras, RJ, Brazil
RG: 04697173-5 Detran-RJ
CPF: 760.256.677-72

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Editorial

The LGI Laban Practitioners on-line Forum is open to all subscribers and to non-subscribers for a small fee. You need to register your interest by emailing trustees@labanguildinternational.org.uk

So far, we have interest from international practitioners who want to present their explorations of Laban’s work in relation to new technologies, architecture, contemporary dance training, movement for actors, and LMA with horses. If you would like to share your practice, use the Trustees email address to get in contact with us, giving details of your proposed presentation.

As a choreographer and performer specializing in the dialogue between new technologies and dance, I felt from the beginning of my research the need to find a common language between human beings and machines, so that the latter can understand the activity of the former. In the course of my artistic and technological research, if there is one thing I have learned from computational thinking, it is the need to break a problem down into smaller problems, and that is why I identified in Laban’s analytical approach the perfect link between the two worlds.

During my studies at the Accademia Nazionale di Danza in Rome, I had the opportunity to study in a theoretical, historical and practical way Laban’s movement analysis and when I arrived at Casa Paganini InfoMus in Genoa (http://130.251.14.190/index_eng.php) I discovered that even for engineers and technicians that type of schematization of movement had been one of the preferred choice in the analysis of movement, especially where it was necessary to outline specific “features” to be analyzed for the system in the dance field.

When working with dance and technology, one of the places to start is from the transformation of movement into data, which then in turn can be converted to other

Trustees Report September 2022

The Trustees are working hard to promote Laban’s work, particularly through the event ‘Laban Practitioners on-line Forum’ December 15th, 2022; see information on this elsewhere in the magazine.

As always, the Trustees are keen to support applications for funding for activities which promote Laban’s work. One of those whom LGI has supported has contributed his report on the Acting Methods Reconsidered Conference in Marathon, Greece. Information on how to apply for funding is on the website. The Trustees are pleased that Sara Huston, who recently joined LGI as a trustee, has contributed an article to this edition of the magazine.

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

Laban Practitioners on-line Forum December 15th 2022, 12-5pm

New Technologies for Dance and Laban Cora Gasparotti

things, such as sound, images or animations. This type of technology, widely used in cinema, is called *motion capture* (https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Motion_capture), a system responsible for capturing human movement in which a simple and brief gesture appears as an infinite number of coordinates in space and data. To make order and analyze these data, engineers, in collaboration with others, outline features, which are, to simplify, key aspects that provide us with information about a specific field of that gesture. It is precisely in understanding what are the salient aspects of a movement, which together can provide us with information about its nature, intention, quality, that Laban’s analysis has its central role. Giving a scientific method to dance, but also to movement in general, is what is needed in these cases and in creating the parameters of Space, Time, Weight and Flow, Laban has provided this. In this way, having values for these subsets we are able to have a clear vision of the analysis of the given gesture, and enables the system through these parameters to know what it must look for in the disorder of the obtained data.

What we borrow from Laban’s analysis is, above all, his scheme of division of the movement into several aspects that compose its essence. This is not only in the phase of capture and analysis of the movement but,



wanting to be consistent with the aspects analysed, also has a fundamental role in “generative art”, or an art that starting from the aspects analysed (in this case movement) reduced to numerical schemes, which then transform the data into something else such as sounds, images or lights. My particular interest is “Sonification”, that is, “Data transformation into sound perceptions or data dependent sound generation as long as it is systematic, objective and reproducible” (Hermann, et al. 2011). This type of technique is used in very different fields, including medicine or rehabilitation, but has been part of research activities that involved dance (see Jensenius and Berkstrand, 2011; Grosshauser et al., 2012; Camurri et al., 2016 and Camurri et al., 2018). In my current project, “Sonified Proprioception Technique”, after a wide phase of research and theoretical structuring, in the testing phase for hardware construction I analyse how sonification can play an important role in contemporary dance training. The system analyses the data derived from the movements of the dancer in real time and transforms them into a type of sound that can provide the dancer with information about that movement amplifying its proprioception through listening.

In this case I was helped by the schematizations of Laban for, after various studies on sound and how through cross-modal and synesthetic processes this can convey information, I was able to associate, at each parameter, a certain sound characteristic. For example, a particularly heavy movement can be matched by a very low pitch sound (see some examples at <https://youtu.be/j2zOVokYrlg>). It may seem obvious but, without a verified scheme like that of Laban, it would have been very difficult to delineate the fundamental aspects of a movement.

There are many developments and projects in this field, such as the project I am working on with sound designer Giangiacomo Gallo (see “Interactive Dance Workshop” <https://folk.ntnu.no/andbe/index.html#CasaPaganiniWorkshop>). I can only say that combining dance and technology or art and technology in general can be a huge opportunity for the human being to investigate his new spirituality, sociality and form: on this occasion Laban holds us by the hand, indirectly providing us with valuable analytical tools.

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Italian performer and choreographer, Cora Gasparotti, has undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from Accademia Nazionale di Danza in Rome. As well as dancing in works by choreographers such as Enzo Cosimi and Mario Piazza she is an active exponent of new technologies for performing arts and dance. She is a member of the Casa Paganini InfoMus research and development team and CID-UNESCO; her research explores new technologies, such as motion capture and virtual reality, in search of a new digital humanity. Her screendance works have won numerous international competitions with her Crisalide the first screendance short released on Amazon Prime Video (2020).



Laban Guild International is a new member of the UNESCO International Dance Council. It was very timely that I was able to attend the World Congress on Dance Research held in Athens in July 2022 and introduce our organisation to a wider network of dance practitioners (see <http://2022congressathens.cid-world.org/proceedings/>). This was a gathering of many different dance forms from all around the world. We all united in believing that discussions of dance could bring people together, and make new connections to ideas of dance creation, education and performance.

The event included performances every evening at the Dora Stratou Theatre in Plaka, on the side of the Acropolis. This theatre and school is home of the Greek folk dance company, with a wide, open-air stage allowing excellent viewing of dance from every seat. It was such a beautiful setting on balmy evenings with the moon shining down and the bats flying overhead. A mixed programme was presented each evening to all invited delegates. Solos, duets, and groups from teachers, schools, and choreographers, all gave short intensive blasts of their particular styles. The constant changing of dance forms from different countries and historical periods was dynamic: from rituals re-imagined from the time of Ancient Greece to new trends in hip-hop fusion in contemporary dance. I was amazed throughout the event at the number of groups that had rehearsed to present, and how this was a combination of new approaches within the traditional styles of their

native countries, including classical ballet technique with Indian traditions, Brazilian carnival, Spanish flamenco, Salsa with singing, and several expressive solos that connected to the personal journeys of the dancers. My contribution, on the first night, was to appear as Shakespeare’s Dancing Master and consider how dance forms known in history could connect to shared rhythms still recognised in dance today, with the audience clapping along and suggesting ideas about what they knew about the famous English playwright. I asked the audience to imagine Shakespeare was visiting Athens for the first time, to see the place where we are led to believe that dramatic performance first began. With so many different offerings, the audience was encouraged to see how each performance had its own individual style, with a real variety of music filling the theatre and many different costumes from so many different traditions being exhibited. Each evening was a celebration of diversity and the energy of live dance performance.

Academic presentations were held each day at the Serafio City of Athens Sports, Culture & Innovation Center, which was a lecture space to present papers with powerpoints. Each paper lasted twenty minutes with discussion between delegates occurring at the café in the breaks. The issues included: the curriculum for dance training; new ways to approach studio teaching; how an artist’s practice could relate to history and culture; how dance is used in therapy; and the historical

research of different dance forms. It was interesting to identify elements in the topics and papers that could be related to the work of Rudolf Laban. For example:

How Laban's dynamics are used in the analytical process in motion capture (eg Cora Gasparotti (Italy): "Sonified Proprioception Technique – S.P.T.")

Defining "Flow" in movement (eg Louis Laberge-Côté (Canada): "The Porous Body. Cultivating Malleability in Traditional Dance Training")

Trace forms to capture a particular dance style (eg Mr. Hardeep Sahota (U.K.): "Bhangra Lexicon: Mystics, Music & Migration")

Communal dance events inspired by a Movement Choir approach (eg Dr. Iliana Petrova Salazar (Bulgaria): "Dance Therapy- Searching for the European Triune model")

Dance notations and ways of writing dance (eg Dr. Elnaz Sheshgelani (Australia): "Dance in Persian Dramatic Storytelling")

The vertical axis in movement training (eg Ms. Ghislaine Bottero (France): "The Bottero Method: balance into the movement")

Posture and gesture merger (Mr. Jose Angel Carret (Canada): "Use of gesture in Contemporary Dance")

My own paper demonstrated how the 15th century Basse Danse notation could be activated by using Laban's division of the kinesphere into the six directions, and how awareness of the balance between each axis (vertical, horizontal, sagittal) could be used to interpret written instructions such as "step low" while remaining "raised." Other papers also addressed the historical nature of dance research, including "Multicultural dance dialogue" by Dr. Patricia Elizabeth Torres Villanueva of Mexico; historical changes in social dancing such as the tango (Prof. Karen Lynn Smith (U.S.A.): "Tangomania – Sensation or Scandal?"); and an overview of cultural developments by Ms. Gita Sellman from Sweden entitled "Global diversity in Dance". The use of choreographic devices for contemporary dance was presented by Konstantin Tsakalidis (who is based in Germany), giving examples from his recently published textbook, that he had developed from his practical experience since graduating with a Master's degree in Choreography from the Laban Centre in London. Questions after all the presentations stimulated further discussions, and delegates followed up their enquiries at the social gatherings throughout the congress while also enjoying a display of professional photographs and dance images, which demonstrated how diverse the membership of UNESCO is world-wide.

Further interaction was particularly encouraged with the presentation from Liliya Kosyreva and Mariana

Gomes which gave details of the forthcoming "Dance Connection Project" being developed in the UK. This initiative has been established to encourage dance practitioners to use web-based formats to share ideas further. Hopefully, many of the connections that were established at this congress will continue, and ideas will be further explored - I hope to report the developments in future articles.

The final day of the congress was dedicated to a series of practical workshops, occurring in two studios running simultaneously. This allowed delegates to explore ideas in practice that had been presented in lectures and performances, giving examples of their teaching, and also sharing individual choreographic approaches. I selected to learn some Bhangra dance moves, to refine gestures while dancing Kathak, to consider how to instruct the teaching of pirouettes, to learn a sassy Broadway musical theatre routine, and even to awaken my inner Greek goddess - I decided this Ancient Greek workshop might be appropriate to prepare me for my next steps as, following this congress, I would journey to Marathon to be part of the "The Makings of the Actor" conference, and focus on Laban's ideas applied to actor training. A review of this Symposium in Marathon <https://symposium2022.themakingsoftheactor.com>, organised by Kiki Selioni with support from the Labanarium, will be featured in the next magazine.



Community Dance in the Aftermath of Pandemic Restrictions

Dr Sara Houston

When the pandemic struck and countries dictated lockdown, many dance artists working freelance lost six months of work in the space of six hours. What use did arts organisations and companies have of artists when we could not meet, let alone touch each other? By the end of 2020, 55,000 jobs - a third of music and performing arts sector in the UK alone had gone. By February 2021 the figure stood at 80,000. The same was true of other countries that enacted public health measures when the pandemic struck. This meant billions of dollars wiped from the global economy. At a local level it meant artists inventing new ways to make work, or leaving the arts to find other occupations.

What has been highlighted by the pandemic is the importance of relation, communication, touch and moving in proximity. Dancing with others is one mode where these elements are present. It was very apparent when the pandemic struck that these very elements were curtailed in order to prevent the spread of infection. At once, the elements which had contributed to dance's power were suddenly off limits. Where did that leave dance, now shorn of its relational potential?

It is interesting that over the months of the pandemic dance artists proved that dancing can still create connection, even when people are locked down in their houses. It is clear that dancing can exist within the domestic space and virtual space. As conceived by professionals working with communities, participatory dancing has had to adapt. This has meant reconsidering some of the key points of engagement for relating to each other in space. Dancing online, or dancing alone in one's house, is not the same as dancing as a group together face to face. Dancers have had to reevaluate touch, for example. How do we touch without touching? How can we reach out to people, virtually? How can sensing the body still be a part of dance making? How can we still create together? How do we still have fun dancing? How can we replenish our wellbeing through dancing virtually or alone?

Within the midst of the pandemic, it was clear that community arts still resonated with people, despite the seriousness of contagion, despite a collective experience of suffering, ill being and ill health. The adaptations that dance artists grappled with have allowed them to see how versatile dancing can be and how dance can create, or point towards, positive approaches to living well. At a time of loss, and a lack of social and cultural engagement, dance continued to be a force for developing approaches to artistic practice, social engagement, health and well being.

In 2022 with covid restrictions lifted, yet still with many maintaining patterns of pandemic induced behaviours (myself included), where is community dance now? It is cautiously bringing people back together. Sometimes still virtual, sometimes with masks, sometimes without



touch, often without restrictions. With less restriction now, the pandemic has given dance artists more choice about using the digital medium that would have been unusual before. What is less clear is whether there will be as much arts funding available for programmes and projects. Local authorities used to be one of the biggest funders of community dance work. With the pandemic and cost of living crisis now upon us, some of this participatory work may not be sustained.

There have been plenty of professional development opportunities opening for dance artists working with community groups, largely through the use of accessible and stable video conferencing platforms, such as zoom, which have made breakthroughs into mainstream use during the pandemic. This has allowed more cost-effective ways of creating professional development opportunities, such as People Dancing's Perspectives on Practice sessions. These sessions have included how to engage particular populations online, use of voice for teaching delivery and networking opportunities.

The Pandemic has even perhaps enhanced the desire among dance artists to share artistic practice with others. And the idea of care is high on the agenda – the notion of caring about others has been highlighted through lockdowns, as has the idea of connection. Take for example the Italian programme Dance Well, for those with and without Parkinson's who dance in and around the civic museum in the city of Bassano del

Grappa and the surrounding areas. The programme also welcomes the young asylum seekers and refugees in the town. The model has been exported to Hong Kong during the Pandemic and this year the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts and the Jockey Club are running the programme. Also this year Dance Well has started a large Creative Europe funded project to expand their work in Lithuania, France, Germany and the Czech Republic. The proviso for the European Dance Houses taking on the organization in these countries is that they work with dance artists, people with Parkinson's and refugees in buildings of cultural significance. This includes an art deco swimming pool!

In the UK this year the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the Commonwealth Games provided community dance artists with a platform to create work with local groups. Amici Dance Theatre, the first inclusive dance company to be formed in the UK, celebrated (2 years late) its 40th anniversary. True to its ethos, Amici invited other inclusive groups of disabled and non-disabled people from around the world to share the stage and workshops with them. Community dance is alive and kicking into the post-pandemic era.

Laban and Modernism: Rio 2022

Dr Valerie Preston-Dunlop

This is a brief outline of the keynote address given at the 22+100 LABAN AND THE MODERNIST PROJECT, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 22 – 25 June 2022. The link for the video is <https://vimeo.com/712769744> It is password protected – if you would like to view it, please contact secretary@labanguildinternational.org.uk

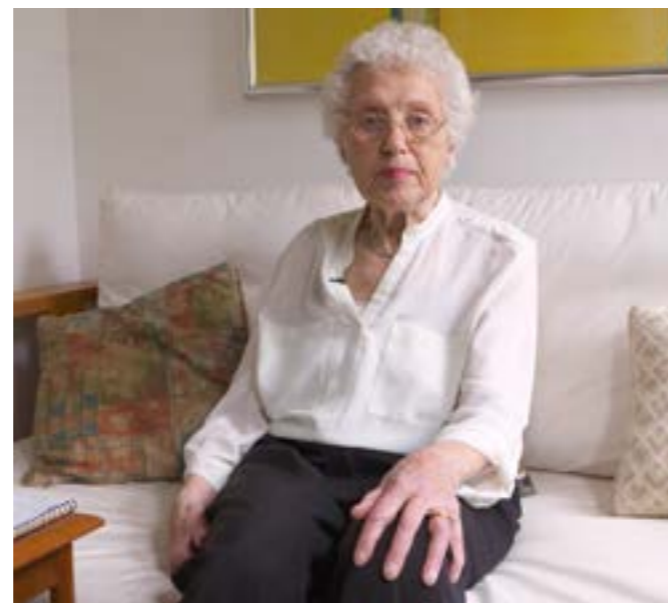
Clip 1
1948, Manchester. I am 17, Laban rising 70.
After a sweaty class watched by Laban, he says "Val, DO IT AGAIN!". I do. He says it six times. Angry, I say "WHAT DO YOU WANT?" He says "AH, DO IT AGAIN!" I do with the dynamics of fury. He says "AH. Tomorrow you start as one of my apprentices".
So what did I learn from that?
Don't wait to be told, listen to your own body and realise your potential

Clip 2
1956 London. Structured Improvisation has arrived from the USA
I say to Laban, "Your notation can't write what is needed now. What will you do about it?"
He said, "YOU DO IT VAL".
So what did I learn from that?
Pay attention to cultural changes and respond.
So, I created Motif Writing which is still used

Clip 3
1910 Munich. Laban begins his career in Dance. Dance is dominated by music, Diaghilev, Opera Ballet, Social

So the pandemic puts into focus three aspects of dance:
- the fact that work for dance artists is precarious;
- that dancing with others can be a case study on creating connection and building community support that is badly needed, particularly in difficult times;
- and that dance artists, whether they recognise this or not, have a great capacity for translating, or transferring their skills to different contexts and changing situations.

Professor Sara Houston speaks internationally on community dance and political issues concerning dance and the arts. She is passionate about everybody dancing whatever age, gender or ability. Her recent research has focussed on the impact of dancing for those living with Parkinson's. Publications include 'Dance in the Community', in D. Amans (Ed.), An Introduction to Community Dance Practice (2nd ed.) London: Palgrave Macmillan (2017) and Dancing with Parkinson's Bristol: Intellect Books (2020)



Dance. So, what did he do?
Take the music away to reveal Dance's own grammar, own form and rhythm and explore how dance, sound and silence can work together.

Clip 4
1912 Munich. Ballets have stories, a narrative. Is that necessary?
Also in Munich is Wassily Kandinsky, artist. The photograph has arrived. Painters are asking, will that jeopardise our work? Kandinsky responds, creates abstract paintings.

So Laban asks, can dance be abstract? What can it be about?
It can explore itself. That is enough.

Clip 5
1912 Vienna. Composer Arnold Schoenberg is embracing Modernism by questioning the dominance of the pattern of tones and half tones in the traditional musical scale. He proposes the equality of all intervals. How does Laban respond? What if all directions are equal, the six on balance that are of ballet, and the twelve in between the dimensional, the diagonal, that are the off balance diametral directions. What 3D plan of space do these offer? The icosahedron, with 12 equal directions, becomes his new map of space.



Clip 6
1919 Residency as choreographer in Mannheim Opera. There is an assumption by opera dancers that their job is to dance the steps they are given. But Laban doesn't work like that, he expects dancers to be creative.
Laban realizes he has to create a new training method that prioritises creative movement making, basing it on what was revealed of movement's grammar by taking the music away.

Clip 7
1924 Zagreb and Hamburg. In 1923 there is hyperinflation throughout Germany. Laban's dance company, the Tanzbühne Laban, is on tour, gets stuck in Zagreb as their German funding collapses, disperses, with some returning to Hamburg. Laban has to earn somehow, to support his dancers.

In Hamburg Laban starts, using the grammar of dance to create a new kind of dance theatre, Kammertanz, chamber dance (chamber music) with all manner of small-scale works made with and by his creative dancers, for performances all week for an audience who become regulars.

Clip 8
Three examples of Kammertanz Modernist works, performed by Trinity Laban dancers: Exstatische Zweimannertanz, for two priestly figures, uses a Tetrahedral form, Rosicrucian and Dervish material; Krystall, duo for two women, "a delight in line", uses a six ring spatial form; Marotte, solo for a man, is based on behavior observed in a mental hospital.



On the Movement Choir

Janet Lunn

Variations on the Green Planet was an on-line Movement Choir stimulated by Sir David Attenborough's tv series on the themes of complexity, symbiosis and connections in nature and our rejoicing in experiencing it. The Laban Movement Choir Project had provided an afternoon on these themes earlier this year, which was greatly appreciated, but some people could not make it, so we adapted it a little and offered it again one morning in August. As always there were set pieces, opportunities to improvise and the chance to develop our own movement event with a partner in a 'break-out room' on Zoom. Again, it was well received, and some people stayed on afterwards to talk about the implications of the material and ideas in their lives and local environments.

Two pieces of feedback we were grateful to receive were:

Thank you all so much for a truly creative dance experience this morning. Your management of the material, and we the dancers, was charged with sensitivity and a real understanding of how to promote creativity. And as always, your sessions act as a springboard from which one might develop in all sorts of directions.

The green planet was such an absorbing theme to explore. I liked the idea of variations and they seemed to each be a perfect length to work on and remember. This made it most enjoyable to feel I knew what was coming next in our final performances.

These wonderful on-line events have been unusual and very special not just during lockdown

The Well Being Hub

Susi Thornton

The Well Being Hub of Laban Guild International is a vigorous meeting place for people interested in how movement, story and spirituality relate together. We have a group of six regulars, from the UK, Scotland and Austria, meeting every two months with some topics offered and others spontaneously shared at the group meeting: we are really enjoying the contact. For more details contact susithornton38@gmail.com

but since then as a means of dancing with friends from overseas and those who cannot travel to venues to join in the very special experience of a Movement Choir. We hope to continue in this medium in the future but are, of course, longing to dance in person together, to touch and create with partners, small groups as well as dancing in harmonic unison as a large 'choir' of people, just as vocal choirs sing together.

Last year we held a Zoom event to be part of a global dance experience with an organisation called Global Water Dances. Using the music Elegy for the Arctic, performed by Ludovico Einaudi on a piano on an iceberg (!), we explored and created material on the themes of the water cycle, tempest, drought and flood and of working together for the conservation and preservation of water.

Global Water Dances uses the international languages of dance and film to promote awareness and a behavioural shift toward solutions for water preservation and conservation through community engagement. Their next worldwide event will be on June 10th, 2023, and the Laban Movement Choir Project team of Maggie Killingbeck, Susi Thornton and Janet Lunn hope to engage with it on or about that date with our first in person Choir in several years. We hope to locate a venue with access to water, recruit a community of Laban enthusiasts and contribute to this important and inspirational initiative with a 'site specific' Choir. If you are interested, please contact Maggie Killingbeck mm.killingbeck@gmail.com

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Email: brendamckee@btinternet.com

'Third Age Dance' in Cambridge

Contact: **Maddy Tongue**

01223 302030

Weekly Drop in Classes

Led by **Viv Bridson**

Every Sunday at The Place (16 Flaxman Terrace WC1) from 12.00 – 13.30.

The class is for those who are trained or would like to be dancers, actors or performance artists. Viv does not teach Laban theory, rather, in the tradition of Jooss and Sigurd Leeder who developed their professional training from Laban principles, she uses her knowledge to structure the class and the material.

£9.00, concs £7.00, unwaged £5.00 – pay in Studio

Contact: danceprojects@btinternet.com

Weekly Workshops

Led by **Jenny Frankel**

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

Fee: £10 per workshop

Contact: 07970 536643

Email: jennyfrankel.laban@gmail.com

Movement workshops for musicians

Facilitated by **Alexandra Baybutt**

Play As You Are (<https://alexandrabaybutt.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7af725bbcc79827225a22e6a9&id=4c21aceb3c&e=0283ccaf58>)

8 November (Amsterdam) & online somatic/sound/movement workshops for musicians of all kinds, co-facilitated with Maya Felixbrodt

Barefoot Opera (<https://alexandrabaybutt.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7af725bbcc79827225a22e6a9&id=cfb1aa8cfd&e=0283ccaf58>)

November 24 movement workshop for singers (Brockley, London)

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(<https://alexandrabaybutt.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7af725bbcc79827225a22e6a9&id=5959043b6e&e=0283ccaf58>) and research continues: clients see me online and in person for a range of questions and interests.

Dramaturgy

'DJ Whimsy or what will the climate be like?' Alexandra working with choreographer Tania Soubry (<https://alexandrabaybutt.us17.list-manage.com/track/click?u=7af725bbcc79827225a22e6a9&id=24bba01b87&e=0283ccaf58>) on her latest creation, premiering later this year and with a London date: 24 April 2023



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Laban Rio 2022

