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Library News

From the Dance Notation Bureau

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Dance Notation Bureau Library

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Martha Graham Works at the DNB Library

by Jennifer Garda

IN 2002 A COURT DECISION was made in regard to the choreographic works of Martha Graham. The Martha Graham Center received the rights to 45 Graham choreographic works, former artistic director Ron Protas received the rights to *Seraphic Dialogue* (1955) and 10 works are now listed in public domain.

The DNB Library houses scores of eight Graham works (*Steps in the Street* and *Diversion of Angels* are complete scores, the rest are works in progress):

**Steps in the Street* (1936) taught by Joyce Herring (2003) based on a revival by Yuriko [Kikuchi] and Graham in 1987, notated by Ray Cook, 2006.

American Document (1938) notated by Helen Priest Rogers, 1940's.

El Penitente (1940) notated by Muriel Topaz, 1973.

**Appalachian Spring* (1944) revived by Carol Freed, notated by Christine Clark, 1972.

Dark Meadow (1946) revived by Helen McGehee, notated by Susie Watts Margolin, 1964.

Diversion of Angels (1948) notated by Muriel Topaz, 1967-1971.

Diversion of Angels (1948) revived by Nathan Montoya and Takako Asakawa, notated by Leslie Rotman, 1996.

Seraphic Dialogue (1955) as taught by Ethel Winter, notated by Julie French, 1965.

* Dances in public domain

STEPS IN THE STREET (1936) is our newest acquisition. It was part of a Depression-era Suite, "*Chronicle*," and was brought back to life by Yuriko [Kikuchi] and Martha Graham in 1987. When *Steps in the Street* came into public domain, the Department of Dance at Vassar College, asked to stage it for their concert program in 2003. Joyce Herring taught her version of Yuriko and Graham's reconstruction from 1987. Ray Cook, retired professor at Vassar College and a certified notator, wrote the score. The project was made possible through the grants from the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts. It was completed and stored in our library in 2006.

THE PUBLIC HAS ONSITE ACCESS for educational and research purposes to these Graham scores, except *Seraphic Dialogue*, which requires special permission from Ron Protas.

A circulation fee is charged to rent the scores. Questions should be directed to the Library Notation Associate, Mei-Chen Lu, by calling the DNB or through email at library@dancenotation.org.

THE MARTHA GRAHAM CENTER OF CONTEMPORARY DANCE has made several of its masterworks available for student productions. Yuriko has been offering her services as a stager to ensure the continued performance of these works. Some of these masterworks are: *Celebration*, *Panorama*, *Night Journey*, and *Lamentation*. A full listing is available on their website along with more information about restagings at www.marthagraham.org.

SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY is developing such a collaborative and documentation project with the Martha Graham Resources to stage and document *Primitive Mysteries* in the fall of 2007. Yuriko will teach both Graham technique and the dance to the students in collaboration with the SMU faculty, culminating in performances in November. They are proposing lecture-demonstrations, panel discussions, master technique classes, video documentation and a Labanotation score. This will provide an amazing opportunity for the students as well as make a link between the cultural and historical significance of the work which was premiered in 1931 and later revived in 1965.

“Not a direct translation, but a ritual about a ritual, *Primitive Mysteries* reenacted an annual Hispanic-Indian ceremony in honor of the Virgin Mary,”¹ as Ernestine Stodelle recalled. The dance is in three sections: “Hymn to the Virgin” commemorating the birth of Christ, “Crucifixion” about his death on the cross, and “Hosanna” about the resurrection. The central role is that of the Virgin Mother, and there are twelve women in the group. The music, composed for the dance by Louis Horst, is for flute, oboe and piano. Portions of the dance such as the entrance and departure are in silence.

Considered by many a pivotal dance in Graham’s career, Don MacDonagh wrote of its revival: “Now she was tackling the area of myth and of universal ideas, a basic change in subject matter to which she would devote the rest of her career.”² As Ernestine Stodelle said, “*Primitive Mysteries* was soundly structured, rigorously ordered and strong as granite. It came out of the anguish of Graham’s whole being, and it could withstand any scrutiny. In its simplicity, integrity and clarity it was of its time. It took a basic situation, the initiation of an individual into a society, and told the story in the most direct and economical of movements. There was nothing of theatrical glamour about it.”³



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THE DNB HAS BEEN GRANTED PERMISSION BY THE MARTHA GRAHAM CENTER TO NOTATE THE GRAHAM WORKS and partial funding has been received from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, allowing us to notate up to seven pieces over a three-year period. The Martha Graham Center is working with us to find situations allowing the DNB to capture her choreography in notation. We encourage colleges or dance companies to contact us with situations where someone is staging one of these works. This will enable notators to write a Labanotation score while a dance is being taught.

As the rest of the funding must be raised, we welcome any contribution, no matter how small, towards this project of putting these dances on paper, so the Graham legacy can continue to live on through live performances.

¹ Stodelle, Ernestine. *Deep Song*, the dance story of Martha Graham. New York: Schirmer, 1984. Page 74.

² McDonagh, Don. *Martha Graham*. New York: Praeger, 1973. Page 77.

³ Stodelle, Ernestine. *Deep Song*, the dance story of Martha Graham. New York: Schirmer, 1984. Page 280.

Do You Know?

We welcome visitors who wish to use the **DNB Library** for reference and research purposes. The DNB Library holds a unique collection of notated theatrical dances, folk/ethnic dances, historical/social dances, Laban movement analysis material, ICKL conference proceedings, and notation periodicals/publications. Please contact us at library@dancenotation.org or 212/564-0985 to arrange an appointment. Library hours are Monday through Friday, 10 am to 6 pm. **Search or print out our catalog** by going to <http://www.dancenotation.org/DNB/library/ntd.html>

Recreation of *Witch Dance*

by Mei-Chen Lu

Recreated by Bonnie Oda Homsey (2006)
Based on choreography by Mary Wigman (c.1926)
Notated by Leslie Rotman (2006)
Music realization by Alan Terricciano (1995)
Based on the music score by Hans Hastings (1934)

During the spring of 2005, the DNB was privy to be involved with the *Witch Dance* project which was initiated by Leslie Rotman and took place at the Ohio State University. This project was to produce a notated score of Bonnie Oda Homsey's version of Mary Wigman's *Witch Dance*. When Homsey traveled to Columbus to set her version on graduate student Karen Mazingo, Rotman also came to write the score. This project was funded by a grant from the Dance Preservation Fund of the Department of Dance.

Homsey had worked on the reconstruction of Wigman's *Witch Dance* many times since 1995, always improving the work. The process began when Homsey created a program of solos "Heart of Woman" for her American Repertory Dance Company. Her goal was to recreate Wigman's 1926 *Witch Dance* or *Hexentanz II*. Wigman herself worked on the piece from 1914 to 1926, then again until 1934, drawing from her life and allowing both her personal and professional experiences to permeate the work.

Unable to find writings or choreographic descriptions, Homsey's only materials were a two-minute film excerpt she received from the Danish Film Archive and photographs. This film enabled her to completely recreate the choreography of Wigman's opening floor section. She also drew on Rudolf Laban's ideas of Effort and Shape, and worked to shift her focus from body orientation, common in American modern dance, to spatial awareness needed for Wigman's work.

The project at OSU was actually the third version of Homsey's recreation. In 1996 she took her second endeavor to the American Dance Festival. This time she was able to incorporate the ideas of Rudolph Bach's book *Das Mary Wigman Werk* (1933) and floor-sketches of Wigman's spatial patterns.

Homsey describes this piece as a dance for a mature female performer. Not only is a strong classical modern dance background required, but also a theatricality to express the emotion needed to bring to life the character of the witch. The performer wears a long, red, backless dress and a black mask, hiding the facial expressions of the dancer. The character of the witch is seen as predatory, even a huntress. She acts on the unbridled emotions inside, becoming aggressive out of her fear. Susan Anawalt of the LA Weekly comments: "Witch's crippled, cupped foot remind[s] us that she is a witch, and that there is a tradition of associating deformed features with evil" (February 3, 1999).

The music also presented Homsey with challenges. Wigman used a Will Goetze percussion score for her 1926 version, but that was lost over the years. However, a draft for the 1934 version by Hans Hastings remained, and composer Alan Terricciano produced a music realization based on it. Although there is a clear pulse throughout the music, Homsey thinks it is imperative not to teach the dance with counts, but to allow the dancer to realize and come into her own phrasing as it fits her movement.

Fra Heineman, Wigman's niece and executrix of her estate, acknowledges Homsey's *Witch Dance* as a "recreation," so Homsey owns the rights to her version. The score is available for educational and research purposes, and arrangements for the restaging and performance of the dance from score can be made through the DNB. Rotman is the designated reconstructor. Homsey is the artistic coach and will also provide the original costume, mask and music CD for performance.



Bonnie Oda Homsey in *Witch Dance* 1996.
Photography by Taek

New Acquisitions

Scores

- *Primate* (2006)
choreographer Robert Battle
notator Sandra Aberkalns, 2006
- *The Return* (1959)
choreographer Rosalind Pierson
notator Irene Cohen, 1979
revised by Sheila Marion and Lucy Venable, 2003, and Lucy Venable, 2006
gift of the Ohio State University
- *Steps in the Street. Excerpt from "Chronicle"* (1936)
choreographer Martha Graham
stager Joyce Herring, 2004
notator Ray Cook, 2004-06
- *Valse Caprice "Scarf Dance"*
choreographer Doris Humphrey
stager Mino Nicholas, 2006
notator Chansri A Green, 2006
gift of Mino Nicholas
- *Witch Dance (3rd Version)* (2006)
recreator Bonnie Oda Homsey, 2006
based on choreography by Mary Wigman, c. 1926
notator Leslie Rotman, 2006
gift of the Ohio State University

Transcribed Scores onto LabanWriter

- *Dan's Run Penny Supper* (1968)
choreographer Dan Wagoner
notator Ray Cook, 1974
transcriber Mira Kim, 2006
- *Steps in the Street*
transcriber Mira Kim, 2006-07

DVDs

- *Continuo* (1971)
choreographer Antony Tudor
Joffrey Ballet II, 1985
gift of Sally Bliss
- *New Dance Variations and Conclusion* (1935)
choreographer Doris Humphrey
stager Deborah Friedes, 2006
coach Lucy Venable
The Ohio State University
gift of Deborah Friedes
- *New York Theater Ballet, Previews 2006*
The Nutcracker, Mother Goose, The Alice in Wonderland Follies, Cinderella
artistic director Diana Byer
gift of Diana Byer

Books

- Farnell, Brenda. *Do You See What I Mean? Plains Indian Sign Talk and the Embodiment of Action*. Texas, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995
gift of Brenda Farnell
- _____. *Human Action Signs in Cultural Context: The Visible and the Invisible in Movement and Dance*. Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2001
gift of Brenda Farnell
- Burridge, Stephanie, ed. *Shifting Sands: Dance in Asia and the Pacific*. Canberra, Australia: Australian Dance Council, 2006
gift of Ray Cook
- The Korean Research Journal of Dance Documentation. Volumes 10 and 11, Fall 2006
gift of Si Hyun Yoo
- Rainer, Yvonne. *Feelings are Facts: a Life*. Massachusetts, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006
gift of Senta Driver
- Williams, Drid. *Anthropology and the Dance*. Illinois, Urbana: University of Chicago, 2004
gift of Brenda Farnell

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