

NEWS  
LETTER

# DNB Bulletin

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## Benefit Parties Everywhere

The DNB Board undertook a new fund-raising plan, with benefit parties both in New York and out of town. Chair Lynne Weber hosted 40 guests on October 18 at the East Side home where she has so often received friends of the DNB. Ilene Fox presented a demonstration of LabanDancer's current stage of development. The guests were absorbed by what it can do and by the implications of notation meshed with advancing technology.

Another party was given October 22 in East Lansing MI by Dr. Carla Guggenheim, a Board member and one-time DNB score autographer who now practices rheumatology. LabanDancer was equally popular with this group, some in town along with Ilene Fox for the annual conference of the National Dance Education Organization, at which Fox two workshops: one on the proposed Labanotation distance-learning project *Visiting Internet Professor*, and another introducing the new DNB course *Trained Eye, Informed Body*. It demonstrates LN's value to the dancer who is trying to pick up material accurately and fast at a crowded audition, and to the choreographer trying to adjust what her dancers are doing more closely to what is intended.

## Spotlight: Martha Graham

After celebrating with the Martha Graham Center the court decisions affirming its rights to the treasure that is the Graham repertory, the DNB has been allowed to begin notating.

Ray Cook is working on *Steps in the Street*, being staged by Joyce Herring of the Graham Company on students at Vassar College. When Cook retired from the Vassar dance faculty he was succeeded by Graham dancer Steve Rooks, who is key to this project.

The last (and only complete) Graham score produced for the DNB was Leslie Rotman's recording of *Diversion of Angels*. As the Board stated in 2002 when it held a fund-raising party and

*Today is tomorrow's history. We are what we are today because of yesterday. We are a product of our past.* (Ann Hutchinson Guest, welcoming speech at DNB/CCU conference in Taiwan 2004)

panel at the Graham Studio, notation of this historic repertory is a high priority for the DNB. It was Graham who told Helen Priest Rogers in 1938 that the field "needs notation" and charged her to study it, a mandate on which Rogers made good when she not only mastered the skill but helped found an organization to foster it.

*Steps in the Street* is one of the signal early works by Martha Graham. Made in 1936 as one section of *Chronicle*, it originally had a Louis Horst score, which has since disappeared. The Company decided to substitute a score from the same period, choosing music by Wallingford Riegger. Some of it will be familiar to DNB regulars as the score for Doris Humphrey's *Variations and Conclusion from New Dance*.

Cook reports that his central challenge is the relationship of the choreography to the new score. The company works in blocs on a steady beat in dancer's counts. Their "one" is not always that of the musical measure but a 16th note later. This makes identifying

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musical cues a complex task. But when Cook defines the way Herring has fit the dancers' movement to the new score, notation will serve future restagers by recording the solution with the precision they need.

Another challenge is that the Vassar cast has one dancer added to the 11 used in a recent production, turning a trio into a quartet and affecting the structure of one canon. Cook is also adjusting the score to preserve Graham's use of height order in the group work, using numbers rather than letters to identify the individual roles.

He describes the working process positively, calling Herring's approach "pleasant and encouraging." She had studied LN herself at Juilliard. At one point she generously told her cast how lucky she felt to work with Cook.

There is a legendary intensity to the work, which was part of a Graham commentary on aspects of the response to war. Cook notes, "you have to rehearse flat out or it's nowhere," and analyses the physicality as "being in contraction from curtain up to curtain down" with bound flow a key element in the style. Cook believes that once given a checking production, this score could see quite active use, as the Martha Graham Resources division of the Graham Center arranges relatively frequent restagings of *Steps in the Street*.

## Profile

*a series on DNB people and allies*

Tina Curran is a powerful advocate for Language of Dance® and its use of Motif to enhance dance teaching and promote literacy from its earliest stages. With Ann Hutchinson Guest and Heidi Wiess, she co-founded the Language of Dance® Center (USA) in 1997. It takes only a brief conversation to see how much progress she has made with LOD since, and why.

Curran, who grew up in Grand Forks, North Dakota, first took notation at Juilliard. There she danced in a restaging from Guest's LN score of Nijinsky's *Après Midi d'un Faune* to check the score for accuracy. LN had been "integral to my education," and Jill Beck, her LN teacher at Juilliard, has remained a central mentor and inspiration. As she

tells it, Beck asked the dancers, who read their own roles, to undertake research but not to look at any videotape. "After the 2nd or 3rd week the movement suddenly made sense with the music, and the life and spirit of Nijinsky's version came through [to us]," she recounts. "We had our own sense of ownership, because we read it." She also read and prepared a duet from Tudor's *Sunflowers* for her graduating performance, checked by Beck and coached by Muriel Topaz. "Now, as a literate dancer, I had access to master works," she said.

Curran was introduced to LOD and Motif at a Guest workshop during graduate study at City College. She had become curious that more dancers did not

*what is not generally understood is the degree to which...literacy brings with it a deep understanding of movement, an understanding applicable to all forms of dance.* (AHG)

latch on to notation, and perceived that "students need to understand notation's use in enhancing and illuminating their movement." Initially, as a slow movement learner, she had found LN training made her faster and more accurate. Motif additionally proved "creative, personal, accessible and inclusive. It starts with the basics and leads to full structured literacy."

Wherever her studies led her, Curran ran into Guest. Once they spent a whole day together at Jacob's Pillow; after losing touch Guest tracked her down through their mutual colleague Oona Haaranen. Curran was at the University of Arizona when Guest found and drafted her into a full-scale LOD training course in England. She had an intensive course in the LOD approach to teaching dance through the Movement Alphabet and a process of creating, observing, analyzing and writing movement in Motif symbols. 2 more intensives followed as she finished graduate work at SMU. Joining the SMU faculty, she passed on her new discovery. For 3 years she taught college students there, and children through the Young Audiences of Greater Dallas program, using LOD in each setting. She found students with this training ask more specific questions and dance with more accuracy. But her mind was on what she calls "teaching for multiplication": teaching the teachers. She wanted to ensure that standards were maintained through a rigorous curriculum. She wanted to know how to make LOD an

international organization.

So did Guest. She drafted Curran once more, and the American LODC was formed. It has been propelled by Curran's infectious energy and her relish for the work and the people it can serve. Summer intensives have been given since 1997 in 5 states and Mexico, 2 of them in New York at the 92nd Street Y's Dance Education Lab. Informed by the clarification of Motif language resulting from this expansion, she and Guest are preparing a 3rd edition of the LOD textbook *Your Move*.

Curran values the connection of LOD with the larger Laban community. LOD and LMA inform and support each other, and all her recent advanced students have, or are near, CMA status. She would also like a closer alliance with the DNB to promote literacy and wider use of the documented dance legacy.

Curran is now at NYU pursuing a Ph.D. The LODC Board (all LOD Certification Specialists, qualified to train teachers) hired an assistant to maintain the present level of services during her course. She looks ahead to the potential for founding LOD centers in Japan (where Val Farrant has already initiated planning) and Mexico. Her persuasive powers make this a clear probability.

## The Library

The DNB has nearly 200 complete and partial scores which up to now have been at some risk, in that all copies of a given work are stored in the same place, the Archives room in New York. For all the rest of the collection, copies are distributed among several addresses, ensuring that an accident at one site would not wipe out all information on a dance at one blow. Mei-Chen Lu has completed a project to send out all these currently unprotected scores for microfilming. One copy of each will be sent to the Special Collections section of the Ohio State University Library.

Lu is continuing a massive reorganization of the Archives, storing them alphabetically instead of in order of acquisition, to achieve more accessible storage of the original notation and oversized music scores. In the process she has already rediscovered some materials that were present but overlooked in the collection.

Taiwanese choreographer Mme. Lin, Feng-Shueh has given the DNB a

score of her *Vast Desert, Solitary Smoke Rise Straight Op. 115 (Dance Symphonic Poem)*, notated by Tsui, Chih-Hsiu. The winter newsletter will have a full story on Mme. Liu's distinguished career and plans for the future of LN in Taiwan.

*What we know of the past is dependent on what has been handed on, what was preserved, what was recorded.*

(AHG)

## OSU Extension

The 2004 Teacher Certification course in June enrolled 11 candidates, with 2 coming from Korea and 1 each from Ghana and Jamaica. Director Sheila Marion noted the wide range of applications in which they were using LN: children's dance; the cultural resources of Korea, Jamaica, Ghana and Ireland; history; and dance composition. The faculty included John Giffin, Marion and Valarie Mockabee from OSU, Jack Clark of Florida State, Patty Harrington Delaney of Southern Methodist University, and DNB Director of Restaging Leslie Rotman.

Marion and Rachel Boggia have completed a website for learning LN called LabanLab, which can be found at [www.dance.ohio-state.edu/labanolab](http://www.dance.ohio-state.edu/labanolab). It has music and video resources to help with reading practice.

Marion has received requests to produce a Spanish version, as several Spanish conservatories have added LN to their dance curricula.

2 more Extension students were selected by the University-wide Denman Undergraduate Research Forum to perform LN-related projects in May. Lauren Engleman and Danielle Kwozko both learned Doris Humphrey's *Two Ecstatic Themes* from score; they also danced the solos on alternate nights in the Dance Department's Seniors/Honors concerts later that month.

Giyoung Lee has been working under Marion's supervision on preserving DNB materials at OSU Library's Special Collections and creating a finding aid for the original pencil scores. She has also completed a finding aid for microfilmed scores, some transferred to off-site storage at OSU from the DNB and from Helen Priest Rogers' Vermont home, which was the DNB's first off-site repository.

## Four Conferences in Asia

The summer of 2004 ran so many notation-related gatherings in Asia that Ilene Fox briefly considered buying a second home in Taiwan. At the first, in

Seoul, the Korean Society for Dance Documentation addressed evolving computer dance technology and saw a PowerPoint presentation of LabanDancer, with slides

rendered in Korean by Notation Associate Mira Kim.

The ICKL conference in Beijing, postponed like the others after the 2003 SARS threat, demonstrated considerable Chinese interest in LN. Fox gave an introduction to the workshop *Trained Eye, Informed Dancer*, which applies notator skills to auditioning dancers and to the choreographic process. She also presented LabanDancer, using slides translated into Chinese by Librarian Mei-Chen Lu.

At a Taiwan meeting sponsored by CORD, the World Dance Alliance Asia Pacific and ICKL, Fox moderated a panel on "Keeping Tradition Alive". On the panel Judy van Zile presented her thoughts on notation "Should We Burn Down the House?" and Patty Harrington Delaney discussed her project on preserving Limon's *La Malinche*

*Your legal document is not transmitted and preserved on tape. The level of importance dictates the form of preservation.*

(AHG)

through a score and CD-ROM. A final conference, again in Taipei, was hosted by the DNB and the Chinese Cultural University, centering on all applications of Laban's work. Ann Hutchinson Guest delivered a welcoming address (quoted on these pages) and was interviewed by Fox on her life and experience with Laban's work. There was also a presentation on LN activity in Taiwan by Wu, Man-Li; Ping, Heng and Wang, Yunyu.

## And There She Goes Again

At press time Ilene Fox was again in the air, this time en route to Monaco for a conference and festival run by the Monaco Dance Forum. She has been asked to show LabanDancer to what should be a fertile

new audience, as both dancers and educators are expected to attend. She will spend time in Paris before the festival with Marion Bastien and visit the Centre Nationale de la Danse where Bastien, a notator who designed the DNB website, is working on a project in choreographic repertoires.

## New on Board

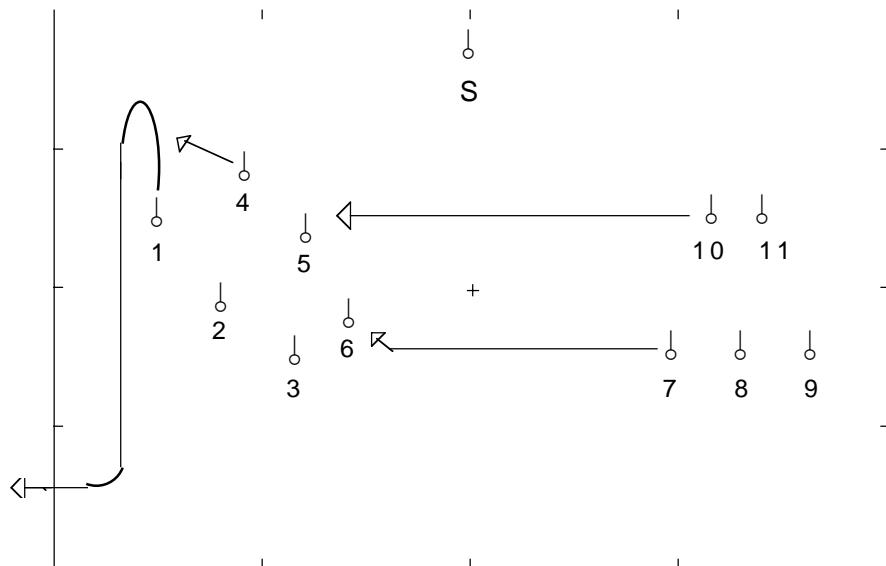
Chair Lynne Weber welcomed Oona Haaranen to the DNB Board of Directors at her October fund-raiser. Haaranen is a familiar figure in LN circles. She has served on the DNB Professional Advisory Committee, and is an active teacher and Certified LOD Specialist at the Language of Dance Center. She is also Education Director at the Brooklyn Ballet, doing outreach in the community using notation. For years Haaranen ran Childdance, a successful children's studio in New York, with Motif again a part of all classes. She is a regular participant in the advanced theory meetings held at the DNB. Weber said, "she brings the DNB such a deep understanding of what we do here, and a broad imagination for how we can do it more widely."

## Faithful Members

There is a striking rise in renewals by members who had been away for a while. The reminding letter this year yielded a number of "re-ups", some inactive as long as 5 years. An exceptionally generous response to the wish list included with renewals brought in a new fax and answering machine. Staff and Board are grateful for this special loyalty.

*It is understandable that choreographers in creative mode worry only about today. But teachers, scholars, researchers should concern themselves with the future. Will dancers and researchers in 2150 thank us for our efforts in capturing and preserving dance in the form of writing on paper? Will they regret that we did not do more? That we had not thought their heritage important enough to find the means?*

(AHG)



Exit order

*floor plan from Martha Graham's STEPS IN THE STREET, notation in progress by Ray Cook  
 (see story, page 1)*

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