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Library News

From the Dance Notation Bureau

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THE HAPPIEST OF BIRTHDAYS TO OUR DEAR ANN HUTCHINSON GUEST!!



On this your 99th Birthday, dear Ann, it is our honor and pleasure to wish you the happiest of Birthdays! You, as our founder and friend, have already established your place in the history of dance and most profoundly in our hearts! You are truly an amazing woman for your contributions to the field of dance notation and in helping to found The Dance Notation Bureau to continue to keep the spirit and intention of this great art of preservation alive and strong. With your energy and guidance as our encouragement, we hope to continue the dream! Ann, you are an inspiration for all of us! Again, Happy Birthday, our special friend!

IDEAS FOR ENSURING THE FUTURE OF LABANOTATION

by Ray Cook

Before I started to shovel sawdust at the age of fourteen, I was educated at a one-teacher Australian bush school along with twenty children whose ages ranged from five to fourteen. While our teacher was instructing older students, I was often asked to go onto the veranda and teach the young ones. It was very obvious that by being in one room, the ten-year olds knew as much as the fourteen-year olds. Although I did not realize it at the time, that experience may have preconditioned my mind to understand and accept the idea that there are different ways of learning. The beginning is a very good place to start, but I later asked myself, “Why did students have to start at the beginning and then always work their way through a prescribed syllabus?”¹

During my teens as a student at the Townsville Grammar School on Australia’s Great Barrier Reef, our headmaster taught geometry with a holistic approach. He made me realize that there were only a few rules that one needed to know which, when applied, could solve many geometry problems. If a rule worked in one situation, it could also work in different situations. How true this is for notation. If from the first time the “X” sign is introduced and explained as a measurement of distance, it will always be such. By showing examples in a score for a body part, i.e. a hand traveling a small distance towards the shoulder or a foot towards the hip, walking with small steps or turning a small amount, this idea of measurement is something that beginners understand in their very early lessons.²

After graduating from the Townsville Grammar School and becoming a school teacher I won a share in the first prize in the lottery. I left the Department of Education and went south to Melbourne to study ballet fulltime. There I heard Meg Abbie’s lecture on Labanotation and was immediately hooked. The next day I signed up for my first lesson.

During these same years in Melbourne, I studied with Margaret Scott, a classical dancer and teacher of immense vision and intellect. Scott, known as Maggie, taught what each part of the body did to correctly achieve the movement or step. I began to see how I could apply the new knowledge I was learning from both Maggie and Meg to teaching Labanotation in the future and also improving my ballet technique. Maggie warned us that if Borovansky, a Czech-born character dancer and both the artistic director and owner of the Borovansky Ballet Company, Australia’s first professional ballet company, knew that we were studying with her he would never take us into his company. At the Borovansky school we were taught a Russian method for learning technique, which did not involve analyzing movement. I don’t remember taking with me anything learned from one step or class to another – you started all over again with the new step. I didn’t know then that the notation I had begun to learn from Meg coupled with an experience I was about to have with a young art teacher from America, reinforced my later approach to teaching ballet and modern technique.

To earn money to come to America and continue my Labanotation studies I worked as an artist model at a large educational art institution in Melbourne where a young newly-arrived teacher from America required his students to faithfully copy pencil drawings of the great masters. By so doing, students discovered how results were obtained. While holding twenty minute poses, I realized that my new knowledge of movement gave me the means to study the dance scores of great choreographers, to discover how they choreographed. But where were these scores?

¹ Later at the Teacher Training School in Brisbane, the head of the school said that he looked forward to the day when he knew that at ten every morning, in every school in the state, students would have the same book opened at the same page. In other words, he preferred to teach by rote with no opportunity to introduce new ideas.

² Once explained as a distance measurement, explain that the degree of flexing of a joint is used to determine the distance (a small flex means a short distance) because it is visually easier to determine a small flexing of the joint rather than a small distance traveled by the free end of a limb.

I auditioned for and was contracted to dance in the Borovansky Ballet Company. On the death of Borovansky, Peggy van Praagh, not yet a Dame of the British Empire, was hired as the Artistic Director. I was not what she needed for the new company she was going to form. Two of the principal dancers promised to work with me, but still I was fired with the suggestion that perhaps I could sell shoes.

Ann Hutchinson, a friend of Peggy van Praagh, had notated van Praagh's version of *The Dance of the Reed Pipes* from *The Nutcracker*. Ann's completed score was sent to van Praagh in Melbourne for me to read for her so that van Praagh could check the accuracy. This was the first dance score that I had ever seen and actually held in my hands. Van Praagh was happy with the result of my reading and demonstrating the movement. Here I was, isolated in Australia and found proof that Labanotation did indeed work. I had to get to New York to study.

During my conversations with van Praagh she said "You cannot teach choreography." I replied "You can teach musicians composition and artists to draw, so why can't dancers be taught to choreograph?" It became clear that van Praagh was talking about the art of choreography, a gift that you are born with, and I was referring to the craft which can be taught. Although I had just held a dance score for the first time in my life, I could not see any reason why a score could not be analyzed and used to teach the craft of choreography. At the time I did not know what craft was, but I would soon learn when I started to stage the Humphrey repertory in America.

I never realized until many years later that before leaving Australia I was already preconditioned as to how I would teach notation when the time came for me to start teaching. I thought

1. Why did teaching have to follow a predetermined sequence?
2. Once a student understands the theory imbedded in a symbol, why not use a holistic approach?
3. For teaching technique, teach the parts that make the whole.

During my first six months in America I passed the advanced notation exam on my second try and was given an elementary course to teach. As of yet, there was no course for certifying a notation teacher, but I did receive some instruction from two people who themselves were not trained as any kind of teacher, but were the most knowledgeable notation people at the Dance Notation Bureau at that time. There was no instruction on how to teach or how to make classes interesting (and there is still no class to address this). You were on your own. In my first class there was only one student. Labanotation was still in its infancy and had yet to prove to the doubters that it did indeed work. After several years of small classes where students learned only rules and practiced their application, classes remained small. With little publicity or exposure in the press telling people what a great product we had, classes remained small.

I finally decided to try some of my ideas for teaching Labanotation. I found that the following examples are excellent to excite students in their first lesson. One is to use my archeology approach. For example: take a page of notation and scorch the edges to represent a page found on a dig. Ask the class to examine the page and make notes of what they discover. What could it mean? The teacher records their ideas on the white board arranging their discoveries in columns, each column representing something that is part of the system. For example, they will discover that the numbers mean that you read up the page. The diagrams have numbers on them that correspond to the other numbers. They show where to travel. The letters could be to identify a dancer. There are two different kind of pins (male and female). There are three long lines (staves) that go up the page. Corresponding to the numbers are short horizontal lines. Some who read music will know what they are. Many symbols are repeated. Some point into directions. There are other small symbols that are not directions (body parts flexing etc.) It is amazing how students will be able to understand what their findings represent when they see how you have arranged their findings – direction, shading (level), length of symbols long and short (timing). End the class by demonstrating the movement. Students will agree with you when you say how simple and logical the system is.

Anthropology has always been of interest to me so when asked in the early seventies to teach notation to new anthropology students at New York University by Pat Rowe, I did not need to be asked twice. I thought to myself, "How can I grab their interest at the first lesson and continue to hold their interest?" I seldom teach the same class twice and decided to take in candy, music, and a dance phrase for me to perform. While eating the candy they listened to the music and watched me perform the phrase. They were then asked to write down what they thought was in the candy, the music and the movement. Their answers to the first two were acceptable but not their answer to the third. I next explained, "As future anthropologists it is your responsibility to know what is in any movement and be able to explain carefully and in detail what you see. I will give you the tools to do just that."

The students were all adults, intelligent and eager to learn. I decided not to teach my way through a prescribed syllabus. After they learned the symbols for body parts, turning (rotation) and bending I demonstrated both dance and non-dance movement showing what was required. First write the body part followed by the action, i.e. turn the head, the chest, the arm and bend the arm or leg and all without detail. Next I showed how to write consecutive and sequential movements - the staff not yet required. Then I introduced them to the staff so they could write supports and which columns are used for chest, torso, leg and arms. This meant teaching direction and level but for support only. In the following classes direction and level for arms, leg gestures and body parts were easily added, but only one in each class with a lot of observing, writing and discussion. Encouraged to write sequentially, they soon understood and began to record phrases of movement or shapes using symbols and all without learning any rules. Yes, rules were broken but if they wrote what they saw it could be understood. Class by class more concepts were introduced. Rather than give rules, I waited for them to ask a question, such as: how to hold a position while other movements are happening and how to write jumps. Even if they did not study notation further, I am sure that they would never look at movement the same way ever again and if no symbols were used they would explain clearly in words what they saw. I firmly believe that if you say the movement in words it is easier to write the symbols that suit the words and thus the movement. If you can't say the movement in words, you can't write the correct symbols. This idea is something you can use at any level of training.

During the next two decades more courses expanding on Labanotation were introduced; how to direct from the score, teacher training, how to go from the page to stage and how to become certified as a notator.

Even with my love for notation, if I were to enroll today for advanced notation classes **never** would I become a notator. Once past the intermediate there is so much advanced material to be mastered, and in a short time, that today it is crammed into three weeks of advanced classes. There is an unavoidable reason for this – the expense for out-of-town students to live in New York City. But the fact remains - the theory is crammed into three weeks. There is, however, a solution which never saw the light of day: Why not offer an apprenticeship?

I could not help but think back in time to that sawmill in Carruchan where I had shoveled sawdust. Then there was another boy of my age who was serving an apprenticeship as a saw doctor. There were no textbooks; he was learning on the job. A few years ago I realized that an apprenticeship might be an alternative approach to notator training. With too much material in the advanced three-week course, the material is not taught. In reality it is three weeks of giving new material morning and afternoon, and for me, simply giving is not teaching. (I think that one day a robot could replace this approach.) To partially solve the problem that there is too much material to be absorbed by the student in a short period of time, more material could be taught in both the beginning and intermediate courses. I asked myself, “Why couldn't notator training be considered an apprenticeship as in many other disciplines such as: electrical, plumbing or school teaching?” When you start an apprenticeship you do not know all you need to know before you start – you learn on the job.

Why not cover less theory more thoroughly in the classroom and cover the remaining theory during the apprenticeship, now known as notator training? When Ann Hutchinson was commissioned to notate George Balanchine's *Symphony in C* and *Symphonie Concertante* there was no notator training program. Els Grelinger, with basic notation knowledge, was chosen to be Ann's assistant--in other words an apprentice. Els learned how to notate on the job and within several years became a professional notator. In fact, the first score I staged was Els's *Song of the West* choreographed by Doris Humphrey.

Whether the student does the advanced as it is taught today or how it could be taught, they know how the system works. They have access to all the theory available in print and can have short meetings with their advisor, or any notator they may know, while on the job. If not living in New York, there is skype and no reason why students can't discuss and continue to learn from their teacher. After the considerable expense in reaching this level, the notator in training has to notate – with no reimbursement - a large ballet or modern work with all requirements for archiving the score in the Bureau's library. The notating process and library requirement can take a year or more to complete. The submitted score is then judged by an examining body comprised of professional notators to see if the applicant can qualify to be a professional notator. But there is no guarantee there will be work if they do pass. I believe that all of these requirements are not necessary to decide if a student is ready to be a notator. How about a much shorter dance in ballet or modern or even jazz, gymnastics or acrobatics? If shorter, why not sections from each including group work? Most of the library requirements, which are very important, can be completed at a later date if there is no time. The most important thing is to get dance notated. After all, the early scores did not have these detailed requirements and are successfully staged.

A completely new idea that was never discussed when I proposed it was: “Why not study Labanotation without passing exams?” Advertising and classes are aimed at finding that rare somebody who has to take exams to get further inside the box and learn more about the system. What if you were not interested in becoming a professional notator or reconstructor or teacher? I began to wonder, “What if courses were redesigned so that you could study the system without having to pass exams to continue an investigation of the system?” If certification were required, an exam would be taken as it is today.

There has always been a reason given why my new ideas won't work. This time it was asked “What if a student studied elsewhere? How does the Bureau know if their command of the theory is up to Bureau standards?” I assume in this case that the teacher had Bureau certification and their judgement would not be questioned. If the student's teacher were not certified, then the student could be tested as it was in the sixties. As part of our training to become teachers, Carl Wolz and I were given several pages of notation with something like one hundred plus errors. It was our task to find the errors. As the student advances through the material more pages of more advanced notation would be used. This would let any certifying body know if the student understood the system.

Even if the system were studied without taking exams, the same theory would be taught, but with more enriching ideas introduced. For example: even before the advanced classes, students are told that what they are learning can be applied to many other disciplines - but never shown through example how to apply new ideas. Why not include ideas, even discussions, points of view, with reading examples in English, Labanotation, and videos from disciplines other than dance? Students who did not want to take exams, and even those who wanted to, would be stimulated and begin to see how their new knowledge could open undreamed of avenues for study, even how to apply their new-found knowledge.

To discourage students from dropping out of a course before it is finished, they must be given more than theory with only reading and writing practice. They must be stimulated to want to know more, to be “hooked” at all lessons and be continually “hooked” and encouraged to stay with the system. With a little imagination it is not difficult to keep them involved and wanting to know more and not necessarily more theory, but more ideas on how to use their new-found knowledge.

For example, the same idea of looking for clues on their first page of notation could later be used to find the notation that represents a movement motif that the teacher demonstrates. Taking this one step further, demonstrate the motif and see if they can find notation that shows a development of the motif. As the student practices reading, it becomes more than just reading. It becomes a lesson in dance composition. This would easily lead into a discussion on the difference between theme and variation or theme and development which can be found in Balanchine's notated ballets. Balanchine's *Theme and Variations* is a perfect example of theme and development, not theme and variation. For the modern dancer, Humphrey's writing on motivation and gesture in *The Art of Making Dances* gives a lot of sketches which can be notated providing opportunities for using body parts as the movement idea is passed from one body part to another. This would lead to students creating a short and simple theme for a body part and notate the result as the idea is passed from body part to body part. This stimulates the student into thinking about other things as well as the symbol and how to notate. Take this another step further and discuss some choreographic craft based on music visualization as used by Balanchine and Mark Morris.

In addition to reading short notated examples that illustrate a point of theory, I think I am correct when I say that students have been trained mainly to record ballet and modern repertory. I see this as ignoring those who are interested in other forms of dance, other kinds of movement, and dance history. If the Bureau's title were changed from “Dance” to “Movement” I think that more students would enroll. Those who wanted to work in ballet or modern would still be doing so. With an abundance of jazz material in the library, it would be easy to design a course based on this resource that nobody else has – a point that is never made when advertising. And why not invite contemporary Broadway choreographers, or any choreographer, to give workshops on their choreography and style as Hanya Holm did in the 1960s? Another possible opportunity arose when I meet with a Broadway producer. I asked him, “Why is the music, dialogue, and even the lighting recorded but not the choreography?” He was interested, but when I passed this information on to the Bureau, they did not follow up.

Jill Beck, the most creative and inspiring teacher that I have ever known, gave her students notation for dances from different countries. By giving her class interesting information on that country, the notation was anchored and the dancing came to life. If there were ten in her first notation class, there would be twenty in her next class. When it became time for me to teach my *Dance Your Dance History* course at CCNY, I used Jill's model. The course ended with my choreographing country dances for a weekend celebration of Jane Austin. They were danced by some of my class in period costumes.

From knowing Jill, I was convinced that reading material should be chosen not only for theory but also for cultural or historic reasons. Any discussions on culture etc. would take only a very short amount of time but give a setting to what is being read. A great advantage in Jill's method, and the dances I choose, is that people who love to dance would soon find just how easy Labanotation is. For example, I attended a week's workshop in Baroque dance. Along with others I sat and recorded what was being taught. I kept writing and they soon stopped their longhand attempts to record the movement. When I showed them how few symbols I had used because of the repeating movements, they wished that they, too, could use this written language.

Some might think my teaching ideas are a waste of precious time (not true) which should be spent learning rules and applying them, which of course has been a major stumbling block for the Bureau that prevented students from reaching their full potential. By using my ideas, students are still learning notation theory. Time, all of the time, is still devoted to reading and writing notation examples, but examples chosen for a purpose take only ten minutes to discuss what you want them to see and understand. I am reminded of a time when Mickey Topaz asked me to teach timing to her elementary class. After teaching the class based on reading simple notation with many questions for them to think about, I ended by asking "What would happen if the notation were sent up in a space ship? On returning to earth in a hundred years, would the restager get the same result?" There was no definite answer, but there was a lot of discussion. The class later told me that if it weren't for my class, they were ready to drop the course. Time was spent not only reading and writing notation but thinking, and I repeat thinking.

Two ideas for making classes interesting, ideas I never did, but would definitely do today – are to show two video selections of choreography from *Swan Lake*. For example; a dance from the ball-room scene choreographed by Petipa and the pas de deux from the White Swan's lakeside scene choreographed by Ivanov, who was an accomplished violinist. A question for the class might be: Why did Ivanov and not Petipa choreograph the lakeside scenes? One reason often given is that Petipa was aging, exhausted and coming to the end of his life--but there was another reason. Most of Petipa's choreography is to music that is "square" and tied to the beat while Ivanov's choreography visually expresses the melodic line. The class could notate a few measures of Petipa's choreography and a longer phrase of Ivanov's choreography.

The second small project I would do today is collect from books on Isadora Duncan that mention dance routines performed by young girls in vaudeville houses. To find out what these dances were, I researched silent films at The Dance Collection in New York City and found some of their routines. I thought, "How wonderful it would be to teach my findings from these two projects to dance historians to illustrate the importance of Labanotation as a tool for research."

If you can restage a dance from both the written word and notation, then the notation must also be a language--a different language. Although it is a phrase that notators casually pass through, I believe that you must be able to put into words what you are going to write. If you can't, then you will have difficulties in deciding what to write. With this in mind I wrote *Les Matachins*, a sword dance for four men from Arbeau's *Orchesography* 1589. By way of introduction you can start by showing a video of the sword fight in *Romeo and Juliette* and offer the notated material as a possible link to where choreographed sword dance may have had a written beginning. Arbeau's word descriptions accompanied by drawings of two men showing some of the sword positions were very clear and easy to follow. When coordinated with the music and a repetitive foot pattern Arbeau provided, the dance comes to life. This kind of dance for four men (but today can be danced by any gender) gives life to a notation class while at the same time generating an interest in Labanotation as a tool for researching dance history.

Well after retiring I was asked to teach a class on notating props. I usually decline requests to teach, but this time I said, "Yes." While thinking about how to teach this in an interesting way, I began to realize that in the past, after having given students theory, a final exercise would be comparable to throwing a person, who after a class or two on how to use arms and legs to swim, was thrown into the water and expected to swim. You must be able to put into words what is happening. My decision for the class was to lift a coffee cup off a table – transfer the cup to the other hand - drop it and curse. I explained step-by-step what the student must include in their script as they recorded the movement.

1. Draw symbols that represent the table and cup.
2. Place the symbol for cup on symbol for table.
3. Decide on the pin for me and draw my relationship to the table.
4. Notate my starting position.
5. Now notate what my right arm does.

6. Show the relationship of hand to cup – above or to the side.
7. Now write my hand supporting the cup before arm moves to new position.
8. Write arm movement as it moves to new position.
9. Write the position of other arm with palm facing the side.
10. Show cup supported by other hand.
11. Drop cup by showing release of left hand.
12. Curse as the cup falls. Include curse word alongside the time line at the moment it is said. By including the spoken word, the class gets a brief introduction on including the spoken word in a score.
13. Question for the class: Do you think it is necessary to show path of cup to floor and the cup being supported by the floor?

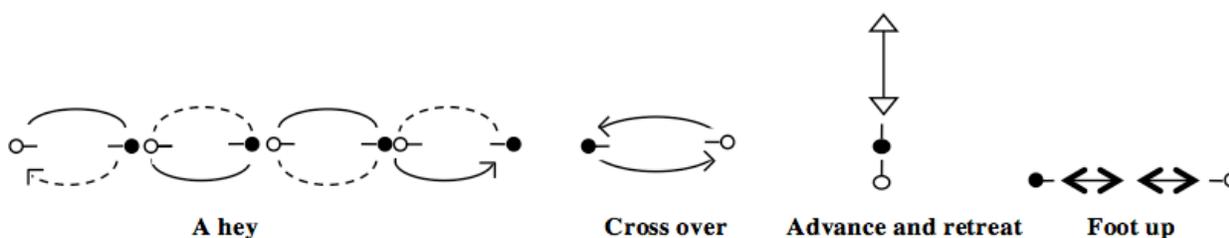
At the end of the class the student has learned how to approach notating props and has had an introduction to notating with words.

When I first taught notating props I chose an exhibition dance, the *Rigs o' Marlow*, a Morris dance. The Morris dance could lead into a discussion as to why some dances were performed only by men? Why did women finally dance them in the 1960s? The *Rigs o' Marlow*, is a simple stick dance with simple repetitive floor patterns for six men, which today can be performed by women. To direct the onlooker's attention to what was most important in the choreography, body parts not involved in the movement were de-emphasized, making the visual and aural design created by the other parts clearer. For example, the arm that was not manipulating the prop was held by the side or with the hand on the hip. The reason for leaving the inactive arm by the side can only be speculated, but today it functions to not distract the onlookers' attention from the foot rhythm as heard in tap dancing and Celtic. This is also true for Limón and Humphrey choreography.

With cultural perspective in mind I notated the following example but never published it. When I commenced to notate *Papa Stour* I did not realize what an important piece this was. Papa Stour is one of Scotland's Shetland Islands where this sword dance had been danced for centuries and appears in some detail as it is woven into a scene from Walter Scott's novel *The Pirate*. When daily existence became difficult, many residents emigrated to the mainland. One who did was a school teacher who continued to teach the dance. Jim Morrison, a dance student of mine from when I taught at Dartmouth College, learned the dance. He later became head of New York's Song and Dance Society. At one of their summer workshops he taught the dance. At this workshop I notated the dance accompanied with music and spoken words. Again the movement is very simple and repetitive. (Ask the class why is movement in this dance and other similar dances so simple and so repetitive?) The notation makes clear what is difficult to follow in videos of contemporary performances. I recently realized that because of my inclusion of the monologues missing from today's recorded performances, my score may be the only complete record of a masque, any masque.

Square dancing is something the class should be familiar with, but beyond the joy of performing the dances would know very little about the origins of this genre. Introduce class to the Playford books *The English Dancing Master* 1651 which recorded music and instructions for dancing them from the mid-seventeenth century. Designed for country folk, they were very simple as was the accompanying music. The satisfaction of dancing these dances was, and still is, in the simple and beautiful repetitive foot patterns on predetermined paths. In the mid-twentieth century Cecil Sharp published *The Country Dance Books* in which he clearly illustrated the figures danced, four of which are below.

These patterns became some of the building blocks for choreography for American Square Dancing, building blocks that can be seen in a video of Balanchine's *Square Dance*, preferably the one with the caller calling out instructions for the dancers as in square dancing.



Knowing the floor pattern first and then creating movement in any style that travels along the path was a choreographic device I learned from Lucas Hoving, a principal dancer in the Limón company.

I doubt that what follows could be used as a “hook” but you never know. When I went to Juilliard on scholarship I was already several years older than the teenaged students. But we all had an interest in common – sex. This motivated us to write positions from the Kama Sutra in Labanotation on the blackboard. I wonder if the teachers who did not know notation ever asked what it all meant. What it did mean is that the students were practicing notation.

I was excited by the Bureau’s decision to put theory courses on the internet, but was soon disappointed when it became obvious at our first meeting that this meant exactly what it said - put the courses (theory only) online but add videos for visual reinforcement to the elementary course with which we started. The past was still going to be present.

The topics to be covered in the elementary course were being rearranged and everybody decided that floor plans were a good starting point. Here was a chance to make a new beginning.

It is my contention that a theory teacher, even a very good theory teacher, which the Bureau has had, should have a broad knowledge and experience with different subjects. This enables them to make their classes interesting enough for students to want to know more and not disappear at the end of the course, or even before the course has ended, something that has too often happened.

Rather than jump in with rules, I suggested that the class should start with a look at the similarities in two systems – Feuillet and Labanotation. This approach would show in the first lesson that Labanotation should not be studied in isolation but provide an avenue for exploration. What follows in some detail, is a guide that a teacher may use when talking about the Feuillet system of notation as an introduction to Laban’s floor plans.

There have been many attempts to represent movement on a page, but it was not until the Baroque Period that a systemized and workable solution was found. The solution was found by Pierre Beauchamp (1631-1705) dancer and court choreographer to Louis XIV, but credit has gone to his student Raoul-Auger Feuillet (c1653-c1709) who published the system under his own name. The invisible lines traced out by court dancers as they moved across the floor were called tracks. Figures were the designs composed from the aggregation of these lines. Favorite figures were repeated *ad nauseum*, and in an attempt to come up with new ideas, Beauchamp reportedly recorded the paths made by pigeons pecking at seed. With geometrical designs no longer holding allegorical significance as they did in the Renaissance, squares, circles, triangles columns, and lines could more freely be incorporated into figures along which dance steps were arranged. Today, figures are known as floor plans which are an integral part of any recording of dance in the Laban system. (This takes only a few minutes of classroom time.)

Before Feuillet, no one had made explicit in print the actual lines which are the basic building blocks for choreography and floor plans. What clearly sets Beauchamp, Feuillet, and Laban apart was that they identified, named and illustrated the tracks that make the figure, i.e. illustrations of the paths along which the dancers travel. The various tracks in Baroque choreography broke down into lines which Feuillet identified as a straight line up or down the dancing area; a line from side to side; a (diagonal) line from corner to corner; a curved line or a circle. Show the students some Feuillet notation and ask class to find the repeated paths in the floor plans.

Lead the students to discover what the floor plans tells the present day reader and dance historian.

1. Identification of dancers
2. The direction the dancers face
3. Relation of dancers to one another
4. Their position in relation to the floor design
5. The path along which dancers travel
6. Both the starting location and finishing location in relationship to the floor design

Laban simplified Feuillet's tracks by identifying only straight and circular/curved paths. Their position on the floor plan would need no name because the line's position and direction were clear. Did you realize that these are the only two lines possible, the straight line and the curved line, from which thousands of floor plans have been imagined? To be successful, any floor plan in the Laban system must give the same information that Feuillet did in his system.

After teaching Laban's solution and examining some of his floor plans, end the class by showing floor plans of some of our famous choreographers. Just as we can begin to understand dance in Feuillet's time, the student realizes that already they can read and understand floor plans giving them access to choreography by famous choreographers.

The second lesson was to cover supports and turns. We know that Labanotation is a language, but few others do. Similar to breaking a code or learning a new language, a page of words is just a page of words until you begin to see that many of the words or parts of the word are repeated like "ing," "er," or "ed" and have the same meaning even when used in a different context, i.e. "er" = one who does; "ing" = state of doing; "ed" = done. Whenever each appears at the end of a word in English, they always have the same usage. Because Labanotation is a language, the same idea applies. So for me, a holistic approach seemed to be the best way to approach the new turning symbol. Although I never introduced the following analogy at the discussion, I would certainly recommend it to teachers to allow one to go from the known to the unknown, which in this lesson is the turn sign, a rotation around a longitudinal axis. I suggest showing some pages of notation for different styles of dance explaining that wherever the turn sign appears it always has the same meaning - a rotation around a longitudinal axis - and demonstrate this.

With this simple and easy-to-understand idea the student realizes at their second lesson that every time the turn symbol appears in Labanotation, regardless of the dance style, it results in the same kind of movement--a rotation around a longitudinal axis. The teacher can show the symbol in a score and demonstrate the rotation of the arm, leg, head, torso. At our meeting some did not agree with my wanting to introduce the words longitudinal axis, wanting instead to use the term vertical axis for the turn in the support column, which it is, but that is all they learn - not the theory embedded in the turn sign. It also makes the student realize that Labanotation is indeed a universal language crossing all cultural borders. This idea of using longitudinal axis in a beginners' class was not agreed upon by all notators in attendance and I think the reason was that the idea did not agree with how they had been taught - and after all they were good notators. Ideas for transposing the classes to the internet went no further.

Back in the 1950s, Helen Priest Rogers broached the idea that the Dance Notation Bureau consider changing its name because the word "dance" limited the scope of possibilities to be explored for the use of Labanotation. The reasoning was that only dance people would investigate the Labanotation system, which in reality is a universal language for a variety of applications. I applaud the idea of a name change which would open the system to the whole world, not just the dance world, and I urge that a name change be reconsidered and hopefully initiated without delay at this critical time.

I am reminded of the fisherman who cast wide his net and caught many fish, as compared to the fisherman who used a line and bait. The fisherman who used only a line and bait could catch only one fish. The fisherman with the net could catch many. In the same vein, an investment adviser once cautioned me that it would be a mistake to put all my assets in one basket, no matter how tempting the dollars might appear. It seems to me that the Bureau has put all its eggs (money or efforts) into one basket--the one earmarked dance--and largely neglected or rarely promoted other disciplines.

A combination of expanding the audience for Labanotation beyond the dance world, and of adopting new, innovative, creative ideas in the classroom in place of the failed, sterile, technical approach to teaching Labanotation would ensure the future of Labanotation. Without such much-needed changes, I fear the system will go into disuse.