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Library News

From the Dance Notation Bureau

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José Limón in *The Moor's Pavane*. Photo by Walter Strate. Courtesy of José Limón Dance Foundation.



Celebrating José Limón's 100th Anniversary in 2008 (1908 – 1972)

by Lucy Venable
(Limón Company member 1957-63)

José Limón's 100th anniversary has been beautifully celebrated at the CORD Conference at Barnard College this past November and more recently in January in Mexico, the land of his birth. It seems fitting to join the celebration by writing a little about the scores of his dances that we are fortunate to have in our library.

Limón created seventy-six dances over a span of forty-two years. Only twelve of them exist in scores, but due to wise planning this number includes his best known and most performed works: *The Moor's Pavane*, *La Malinche*, *The Exiles*, *The Traitor*, *There is a Time*, *Missa Brevis* and *A Choreographic Offering*. Why were so few scores written while Limón was alive or not until long after they were choreographed? Maybe a little history can help explain that.

During the 1950's Doris Humphrey's works were often being recorded while they were taught in the dance repertory classes at Juilliard and Connecticut College Summer School where notation was taught. Limón, too, served as faculty at both institutions where he also rehearsed and performed with his company. From time to time he would inquire how our current "Navajo rug" was coming along as he liked to jest about what he thought was the similarity between American Indian designs and our notation hieroglyphics. These Humphrey scores were some of the first to be put in our library and were produced or contributed to by people such as Ann Hutchinson Guest, already an experienced notator, and Els Grelinger and myself who were sometimes employed to assist Doris Humphrey as demonstrator in these repertory courses because she could no longer dance herself.

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Humphrey was not only reviving old repertory, she was still creating works for both the Limón Company and the Juilliard Dance Theater, and serving as Artistic Director for the Limón Company. Limón, on the other hand, was just beginning to come into his own as a choreographer. Thoughts of preservation of these works were not heavily on our minds or his at the moment. In Humphrey repertory classes the movements were carefully taught, repeated often, and the classes met two or three times a week for 1 ½ or 2 hours or daily for a six week period in Connecticut. The situation was ideal for us to practice as we were learning to make scores. There was time to transcribe notes in between, have questions answered, and see the same movement over and over.

During this time there were two big questions that the DNB needed to find answers to: how to produce notators trained to record in a professional rehearsal situation and how to find funds to pay these people for notating dances that should be preserved. For a period in the late 60's and 70's there was funding for the arts in this country which provided temporary help. During that time the DNB established a notator training program, attracted and taught qualified students, and sought and received funding to notate works. Stagings of Limón works by company members were taking place, and the DNB was able to provide qualified notators more often. The following scores are the result:

The Moor's Pavane (1949) staged by Carla Maxwell was notated by Muriel Topaz, 1963

La Malinche (1949) notated by Muriel Topaz, 1967-68, rough manuscript produced. (Later staging by Sarah Stackhouse, 2001 has been notated by Patty Harrison Delaney, 2001-03)

Missa Brevis (1958) staged by Daniel Lewis was notated by Barbara Katz assisted by Judy Lasko, 1973

The Exiles (1950) 1st movement taught by Laura Glenn was notated by Mary Corey, 1981

2nd movement taught by Sarah Stackhouse was notated by Judy Lasko, 1973

2nd movement taught by Laura Glenn was notated by Ilene Fox and Sian Ferguson, 1988-89

Waldstein Sonata (1975) Limón's last work and unfinished when he died. Daniel Lewis revived and completed it in 1975 using the Juilliard Dance Ensemble. Ray Cook notated it at that time.

The Traitor (1954) staged by Carla Maxwell was notated by Jane Marriett, 1978

A Choreographic Offering (1964) staged by Risa Steinberg was notated by Jane Marriett, 1979

The Unsung (1970-71) staged by Jennifer Scanlon with Jim Clinton, Louis Solino, Colin Connor, Carlos Orta, Daniel Lewis and Joe Aligato was notated by Mary Corey, 1983

There is a Time (1956) staged by Jennifer Scanlon in 1983 was notated by Lucy Venable, 1983-86

Here is some interesting background on how and why other scores were created:

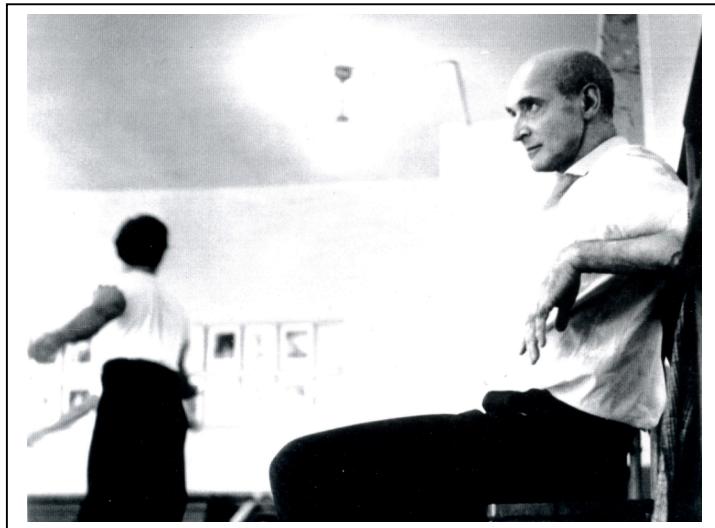
The Mazurkas (1958) or as they were first titled *Dances in Honor of Poznan, Wroclaw, Katowice and Warszawa*, was created in honor of cities and their people in Poland after the Limón Company performed there during a State Department sponsored tour of Europe in 1957 and saw their revival after World War II. These dances, composed to specially chosen Chopin mazurkas, were revived in 1986 by Ann Vachon and Ray Cook for her company, Dance Conduit, with the aid of a silent film by Helen Priest Rogers, and members of the original cast. Cook continued work on the score and completed it in 1990.

Vivaldi Concerto (1945) is the earliest work of Limón in the collection. This is a trio, choreographed in 1945, which opened his concerts for many years. Here there is an interesting collection of scores. One is by Ray Cook (1962-63) in which measures 25 through 40 are missing in the third movement. Another is the first movement recorded by Susan Hess and Dana Holby in 1963, and the third, a complete version, was "supervised" by Lucy Venable in 1973.

Another score was assembled from the work of a notation class at Connecticut College, all of whom participated in Limón's summer repertory class in 1962 when he arranged the thematic movements from his solo *Chaconne in D Minor* (Bach) into a group study. It is interesting to note the names of those students: Martha Clarke, Susan Hess, Judith Hirsch, Patricia Malkin, Jennifer Muller, George Powis, and Carol Scothorn. The same work also has another life in *Chaconne in D Minor*, a group work by Susannah Newman Payton, based on the themes she also learned in a Limón repertory class in the 60's and which was composed with his blessing.

A pleasant surprise in the library is *Dance Suite* (1964) commissioned by Brooklyn College for students during the time that Betsy Carden was on the faculty. It must have been performed over a number of years as the third movement was notated in 1965 by Christine Clark with the full dance notated by Janet Moekle in 1977 and revisions in 1981. It is a suitable dance for springtime as there is a Maypole in the last section. This may be the only dance that Limón choreographed especially for college students.

I started this article to wish José a Happy Birthday. By the end I realize that we are the gifted ones.



Antony Tudor watching an American Ballet Theater rehearsal

Centennial Celebration in Honor of Antony Tudor (1908-1987)

by Mei-Chen Lu

This year Antony Tudor's Centennial will be celebrated by about forty dance companies and university dance departments in the United States! New York Theatre Ballet (NYTB) performed *Jardin aux Lilas* (*Lilac Garden*), *Little Improvisations*, and *Judgment of Paris*. The Joffrey Ballet will present three of Tudor's seminal works - *Jardin aux Lilas*, *Dark Elegies* and *Offenbach in the Underworld*. Boston Ballet will include *Dark Elegies* in their "Three Masterpieces" concert series. Colorado Ballet and Houston Ballet are performing *Leaves are Fading*. Boston Conservatory will be staging *Dark Elegies*, *Little Improvisations* and *Continuo* and Brigham Young University is presenting *Little Improvisations* and *Continuo*. We are pleased to say that all these dances are preserved in Labanotation scores in our library.

In March the Juilliard School of Music, in collaboration with the Antony Tudor Trust, is preparing a weekend of dance workshops, panel discussions, a reception, and performances of *Dark Elegies*. This will include demonstrations by NYTB and the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis (JKO) School at American Ballet Theatre (ABT), in addition to the studio performances of *Continuo* by ABT II, *Little Improvisations* by JKO School and *Judgment of Paris* by NYTB.

Diana Byer, one of the committee members for the celebration and the Artistic Director of NYTB, contacted us to request copies of Tudor's classroom exercises. Well aware of Tudor's belief in Labanotation (26 out of 54 of his ballets are recorded in Labanotation), Byer thought the DNB would have material useful for the Tudor class demonstration. We were able to provide notations of several of his beginner and advanced ballet classes which included adagio combinations that had been recorded by his Juilliard students during the 1950-70 period. Ray Cook, notator of *Undertow*, was one of the students who notated adagio combinations and anticipates assisting Lance Westergard in teaching some of them to the dancers from NYTB, ABT II, and the JKO School for the workshop.

Tudor was a part of the distinguished faculty hired by Martha Hill in 1951 when the Dance Division at Juilliard was established. She included Labanotation in the curriculum and engaged Ann Hutchinson Guest to teach it. Students were encouraged from the beginning to notate sequences they learned from technique, choreography and repertory classes. Guest recalls that Tudor observed that students who were outstanding in notation developed excellent movement analytical skills, which he appreciated.

Muriel Topaz was one of the students who worked on *Exercise Piece*, Tudor's first work to be notated. Guest remembers that Topaz had shown excellence in the notation area and that Tudor sometimes would not start rehearsals without her. Topaz went on to become a notator recording Tudor's *Cereus*, *Continuo*, *Fandango* (with Christine Clarke O'Neill), *Jardin aux Lilas*, *The Plants* and *Sunflowers*, as well as supporting Tudor projects as Executive Director at the DNB and later at Juilliard when she became Director of the Dance Division. With the help of a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, she also researched and wrote *Undimmed Lustre, The Life of Antony Tudor* published in 2002.

Airi Hynninen, also studied under Tudor at Juilliard, later became a DNB notator and Tudor's general assistant at ABT. She notated ten ballets through contracts with the DNB between 1975 and 1990: *A Choreographer Comments*, *Dark Elegies*, *Dim Lustre*, *Jardin aux Lilas*, *Judgment of Paris*, *The Leaves Are Fading*, *Pillar of Fire*, *Tiller in the Fields*, *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*, and *Undertow*.

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Other Tudor works in the DNB library are *Britannia Triumphans*, *Dance Studies (Less Orthodox)*, *Echoing of Trumpets*, *Gala Performance*, *Les Mains Gauches*, *Little Improvisations*, *Offenbach in the Underworld*, *Pas de Trois*, and *Shadowplay*. Ann Hutchinson Guest's 1962 score of *Soiree Musicale* was revised by Hynninen, Topaz and Rochelle Zide in 1975. Guest later revised her score, and it was published as a part of the Language of Dance Series in 1993.

Tudor had an open attitude about allowing his works to be studied for educational and research purposes. He believed that studying the structure of his works would be beneficial to all dance students. He was among the first to allow stagings of his work through notation. In 1979, Tudor composed a testimonial letter to support the DNB that stated:

"This is to reaffirm my belief in the benefits that the dance, in general, and choreographers in particular, are deriving from the activities of the Dance Notation Bureau. The three small dance works that I made on Juilliard dancers several years ago with a grant from the National Endowment, which included a proviso that such works would be made accessible to any small company of sufficient technical capacity, have now been reproduced many times... It is a good thought that the works of José Limón and Doris Humphrey, two of the most famous American choreographers, can survive because the Bureau is making it possible."

Before his death, Tudor appointed several key personnel, including Sally Bliss (executrix of the Tudor Trust), Guest, Topaz, Hynninen, Celia Franca, Maria Grandy, Els Grelinger, Viveka Ljung, Donald Mahler, David Richardson, Sirpa Tepper, Marilyn Vella Gaat, Lance Westergard, and Sallie Wilson to be his representatives in staging his works. Six of these fourteen people were notation literate. As these people have gradually become unavailable, Bliss has trained others who had worked with Tudor directly to carry on his legacy: Kirk Peterson (Master Teaching Associate with ABT), James Jordan (Ballet Master for Kansas City Ballet), Willy Shives (Assistant Ballet Master at the Joffrey Ballet), Amanda McKerrow (former ABT principal dancer) and John Gardner (former ABT principal dancer). They first stage the work on a ballet company and later Bliss, Mahler, or Wilson coaches the dancers prior to the performances.

Bliss also speaks highly of Diana Byer as a stager. Byer, another former Juilliard student, has earned acclaim for her revival, with the aid of notation, of Tudor's smaller masterworks such as *Little Improvisations*, *Jardin aux Lilas*, *Les Mains Gauches*, *Fandango*, and *Judgment of Paris* for New York Theater Ballet.

Leslie Rotman, a certified Labanotator who had studied ballet with Tudor protégés such as Elaine Wilson and Ernesta Corvino, is also familiar with Tudor styles and techniques. Topaz and Grandy trained Rotman to become an adept Tudor notator and stager. Rotman revised *Offenbach in the Underworld*, and notated *Gala Performance* and *Les Main Gauches*. In the 1990s Bliss asked Rotman to stage *Offenbach in the Underworld* from the notation score for the Kansas City Ballet, with Donald Mahler, who had formerly danced the role of the Painter, as artistic consultant. This working relationship continued when they staged the ballet for Star Dancers of Tokyo in 1999 and for American Ballet Theatre in 2001.

Bliss believes in the great value of notation. She foresees that when everyone who has worked with Tudor is gone, his works will continue to survive through Tudor stagers and the notation scores. Both the Tudor Trust and the DNB hope that more of these works will be put on paper before this time arrives.

New Acquisitions

SCORES

- *Makwaya* (1969)
Choreographer Doris Green
Notator Doris Green, 1984-1985
Gift of Doris Green, 2007
- *Prey* (2000)
Choreographer Bebe Miller
Notator Valarie Mockabee, 2000-2002, 2005
Gift of Valarie Mockabee

TRANSCRIBED SCORE

- *Dan's Run Penny Supper* (1968).
Choreographer Dan Wagner
Notator Ray Cook, 1974
Notation Graphics Mira Kim, 2007
- Celichowska, Renata, editor. *Seven Statements of Survival: Conversations with Dance Professionals.* New York, Dance & Movement Press, 2007
Gift of William Kiley

- Gitelman, Claudia and Randy Martin, editors. *The Returns of Alwin Nikolais.* Connecticut, Wesleyan University, 2007
Gift of Senta Driver

BOOKS

- Hutchinson Guest, Ann and Tina Curran. *Your Move*. New York, Routledge, 2007
Gift of William Kiley