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# Library News

From the Dance Notation Bureau

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## *Air for the G String and The Shakers*

by Karena Birk

Whenever I start a new staging project, I have a devil and an angel perched on my shoulders. The devil whispers in my ear (in the case of my current project) “you didn’t dance for Doris Humphrey, you didn’t even dance for someone who danced for Humphrey. You haven’t even performed this piece. All you have is a dance score and you think you can stage this work. Who do you think you are? What right do you have?”

Meanwhile the angel points out “someday there won’t be anybody left who has danced for Humphrey or her dancers. Does that mean her work no longer has merit and relevance? Does that mean no one deserves to dance it or see it anymore? Don’t you have confidence in the integrity and strength of the work itself and the score? If Humphrey’s work is going to thrive into the future, it will have to be staged by people who no longer have a direct connection to her. You are exactly the person who should be doing this, you are proving that future generations can come to a Labanotation score and leave with a vibrant, thrilling dance.”

The devil and angel are currently battling it out as I stage Doris Humphrey’s *Air for the G String* (1928) and *The Shakers* (1931) for the University of Washington Dance Program’s Chamber Dance Company (CDC). I have the joy of teaching these works to a group comprised of graduate students who are seasoned, intelligent performers, and talented, eager undergraduates. We started rehearsing at the end of June for the October performances, and after just a few rehearsals, the dancers have already made impressive progress.

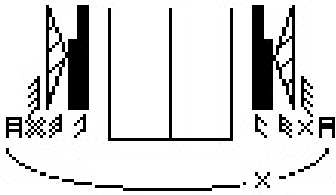
My process started last year when the director of CDC, Professor Hannah Wiley, asked me to stage the Humphrey works. She requested the scores from the DNB, and I started reading about the works. I have found that when learning a work from score, it is best for me to do a progression from wide focus to narrow and back to wide again.

To get a broad context, I read about Humphrey generally, and *Air* and *The Shakers* particularly (and here I must commend how useful and to the point the front material and other information was in both of the scores), and looked at some, but at this stage not a lot, of video.

When I felt that I had a general grounding, I turned inward, and worked almost exclusively with the score and music. While I find it useful and necessary to know other people’s opinions and interpretations of a piece, even more necessary is that I use the score to interrogate myself, and come up with my own opinions and interpretations. I have to make the work become a cohesive whole in my mind, and not use other people’s examples as a short cut, even if I end up with the same conclusions they did. Sometimes this is at the physical puzzle level of figuring out how not to trip on the long trailing capes of *Air*, or how far to hinge my torso back so as not slam down to the knees in *The Shakers*. But more importantly, it’s asking myself what an individual movement tells me about the whole work, and what the whole work tells me about an individual movement.

At the risk of sounding a little crazy, at this point the score begins talking to me (and when alone in a studio, sometimes I talk back). Within the context of the Shaker community, the score told me that the recurrent hand clasp in *The Shakers* necessarily implies a whole attitude of the body, filled with energy, devotion, hope, desire, and conflict. I remembered being a child, waiting for my dad at the airport after he had been gone for six months commercial fishing in Alaska, looking at each person

coming off the plane, simultaneously crushed when it wasn't him and more excited because surely the next person would be him. I could barely contain myself, and in an effort to control the emotions sweeping me that were bigger than myself, I did a similar hand clasp.



**The most common iteration of the “hand clasp”—as elaborated in the glossary**

The score told me that the walks in *Air* can't be just any walks. I want the audience to gasp with amazement at the opening of *Air*, and be unable to breathe until the piece is over for fear of disturbing its sublime beauty. So those walks have to contain a supreme sensitivity in how the foot contacts the floor, more like a hand caressing a lover's cheek. And the constant profusion of symbols for the torso and arms in the *Air* score told me about the centrality of continuous life and nuance in the upper body even more than any one described movement or position did.

This is the moment in the process when the voice of the score usually starts drowning out the voice of the devil on my shoulder. In the past, and most definitely with *Air* and *The Shakers*, I have felt that the dance, through the score, has been insistent in telling me, or even demanding of me, what it required. I go from wondering what right I have to approach a piece to being excited to see it live and breathe on stage. True, I never danced for Doris Humphrey. But I reminded myself, I never studied with Johann Sebastian Bach, and that does not stop me from playing his works on my violin.

Much ink has been spilled about the impossibility of recreating the past, and the danger of dancing a work as a museum piece, but also about the necessity to evoke the historical stylistic qualities of a work lest it lapse into ahistoric blandness. Without trying to rehash the whole topic, I will say that my priority in staging is presenting a work that is engaging and alive for the dancers and audience of today. I don't believe that is incompatible with respecting the historical qualities of a work. In *Air*, for example, an awareness of weight, and of fall and recovery in slow motion, is vital. This is not out of a dutiful sense of homage to Humphrey's seminal role in developing the theory of fall and recovery. It is because in envisioning the performance of the piece today, it is clear that without this, *Air* would be lessened.

After I have formed my own conception of a work through my time of narrowed focus, I widen back out again. Now I am seeking to bring my vision into dialogue with other people's. In addition to reading new material and rereading old, I now search out as many videos as I can. Sometimes these enrich my conception with additional viewpoints; as a stager I always try to come into rehearsal with multiple perspectives on phrasing and motivation, as what fits my body may not make sense for someone else. Other times I have yelled at the screen in frustration with a particular staging that seemed indifferent and wrongheaded. By now I am always deeply in love with a work, and it wounds me to see a performance that doesn't do the work justice.

After my time of narrow focus with *Air* and *The Shakers*, among the resources that I consulted were the wonderful videos from *The Doris Humphrey Legacy*, produced by The Doris Humphrey Society. One of the volumes focuses on *Air*, with coaching by Ernestine Stodelle, and another focuses on *The Shakers*, with coaching by Stodelle and Gail Corbin.

When Stodelle started talking to her dancers in *Air*, she was saying many of the same things I had been saying to myself. She emphasized the importance of a community sense over the individual; that without community feeling, the piece was merely pretty. She told them to “dance *with* the music, not *to* it.” She reiterated how the movements must have continuous life, never a moment of passivity. My mouth fell open as sometimes she used almost the exact phraseology that I had formulated while talking with the score. This was a moment of incredible joy, as I felt that by trying to be open to what the score and music could tell me, I had found a real connection through time to the roots of the work. It was proof to me that Labanotation works; these dances wouldn't be lost!

As I proceeded on to the *Shakers* video from the *Doris Humphrey Legacy* series, I had much the same experience. The devil fell right off my shoulder in astonishment. I especially appreciated Stodelle's emphasis on how the dancers couldn't just do the steps, but needed to learn, investigate, find their own motivations, and do the work with all the force of their own feelings. Whenever I stage an historical work, I want the dancers to feel as engaged and personally invested in it as if I were choreographing just for them. This is particularly true of *Air* and *The Shakers*. Though they each have their technical

difficulties, there are no flashy technical tricks to dazzle the audience with and hide behind. They both require, and reward, the full commitment, intelligence, and presence of the individual performers.

Finally it was time to start teaching. My first rehearsal was for *Air*, which is deceptively simple. It's mainly walking and upper body movement, but the dancers repeatedly exclaimed about the difficulty of coordinating and sustaining the movement, as the slightest bobble is impossible to disguise, but instead is amplified by the expanse of fabric they are wearing. Another challenge is stylistic; the curvilinear arms have similarities to balletic *port de bras*, but the moment a dancer would slip into a balletic posture of holding the body up and lifted away from gravity, it rang false. Watching the dancers look a bit as if they were straining to lift their chests into an arch, I suggested that they instead imagine that they were outside in the sun, opening and relaxing into its warmth. At the next rehearsal, one of the dancers told me that the image was helping her find a greater sense of breath and weight throughout the dance. Within the hubbub of learning steps and counts while trying not to trip on capes or strangle themselves, the importance for the dancers to maintain a constant mantra of "breath, weight, continuity, community" quickly became clear. After countless hours of trying to be five people at once in the studio by myself, I was stunned by the first sight of all five dancers gliding away upstage as their long capes unfurled behind them, tracing their motion through space.



**Costume from *Air for the G String*. Courtesy of University of Washington**

We started *The Shakers* by sitting down, introducing ourselves (this was the first time dancing together for a number of the dancers), and talking for quite a while. They had already done some viewing and reading about the Shakers and about Humphrey, so I sought to bring the material home to them in a personal way. I asked "what do you yearn for? What is so central to your identity, that without it you wouldn't be you?" And whatever their individual religious beliefs, the portrayal of a community united in pursuit of a common goal, and going against the grain of society to pursue it, should feel very relevant to members of a university dance department.

The score for *The Shakers* has a wonderful generosity. In many sections, the score gives a suggestion for a movement, but indicates that everybody should individualize the moment. As I taught, I indicated these sections, and left them loosely sketched in. After a couple of rehearsals, when they had a better sense of the universe of the dance, we came back to a number of these sections, and I asked them to figure out what made sense to them in that moment, within the context of the dance and their own personal motivation. And as the dancers brought their own ideas to bear in these moments, the whole piece came into sharper focus, and they danced with greater conviction.

The rehearsals for *Air* and *The Shakers* are still in process. As of this writing, I have barely finished teaching the choreography, let alone spent much time working on nuance and detail. Yet already, the dancers are bringing a wonderful energy and commitment to both works that make them exciting to watch, rough edges and all. It has been wonderful to see how quickly these dancers have immersed themselves in the works, both making the dances their own, and becoming part of the heritage of dancers who have performed them through the decades.

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*Air for the G String* and *The Shakers* will be performed Thursday October 10 through Saturday October 12 at 7:30 and Sunday October 13 at 2:00 by the University of Washington Dance Program's [Chamber Dance Company at Meany Hall](#), Seattle, Washington.

## **The Karsavina Syllabus: A Personal Journey**

by Shelly Saint-Smith

As a dancer, I've always found classical ballet technique a challenge. In my teenage years studying ballet syllabi in the UK, my teacher eventually prevented me from taking further ballet examinations because she did not consider my technique strong enough. This had a detrimental effect on my perception of classical ballet: I rejected it, turning my back on it in favor of contemporary dance and anything I could learn from MTV pop music videos, thus beginning a long and difficult journey with ballet class. Twenty years later, I find myself in the most unlikely of situations: a Lecturer in Dance Studies at the Royal Academy of Dance (RAD) in London, which has ballet at its core, managing a research project on a ballet syllabus. This story is as much about my reconciliation with ballet technique as it is about the legacies of two luminaries in the dance world, Tamara Karsavina (1885-1978) and Ann Hutchinson Guest.

Much has been published on Karsavina's career as prima ballerina for both the Russian Imperial Ballet and Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, but less is documented about her contribution to British ballet after leaving Russia in 1918. She continued performing until 1932, arranging successful seasons at London's Coliseum theatre, and dancing with Marie Rambert's Ballet Club and the influential Camargo Ballet Society. She mentored Frederick Ashton in his choreographic career, and she coached dancers in the roles she created, most notably Margot Fonteyn in *The Firebird* and *Le Spectre de la Rose*. Karsavina was influential in the formation of The Association of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain in 1920 (now the RAD), becoming its first Vice-President in 1949. She regularly taught classes, arranged dances for RAD students and gave lecture demonstrations. She wrote extensively about ballet technique, ballet history and her own experiences, but at the RAD, it is through her own syllabus – the Karsavina Syllabus – that she continues to exert a lasting influence on ballet training and education.

### **About the Syllabus**

I first encountered the Karsavina Syllabus as a Labanotation score, sitting on the shelf in the office of the [Language of Dance Centre](#) in London. At that time, I was working with Hutchinson Guest on the new edition of her Labanotation textbook and it was one of several of her scores which aroused curiosity. The Karsavina Syllabus was created for the first dance Teachers' Training Course (TTC) of the RAD, which was inaugurated in October 1945. Karsavina began working on the syllabus in 1948 and it evolved gradually as a personal compilation of exercises and enchaînements. It was finally set as the 'Combined Technical Syllabus' in 1954, underwent further revision in 1965, and was notated by Hutchinson Guest in 1976.

The Karsavina Syllabus is essentially a ballet syllabus for trainee dance teachers. It draws heavily upon Karsavina's own training at the Imperial School in St. Petersburg as well as her career with the Imperial Theatres and Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in the early 1900s. Unlike other RAD syllabi, which are ballet examination syllabi, the Karsavina Syllabus is specifically designed to enhance and supplement practical study as part of ballet teacher training. It enriches understanding of core technical skills, develops awareness of different styles of ballet, and emphasizes musicality and movement quality. In her own investigation of the syllabus, former syllabus teacher Rachel Cameron reflects that, "Karsavina continually drew students' attention to balance in movement, balance in line, height of elevation and depth of demi-plié...She placed emphasis on weight, use of gravity and balance equally distributed between the extremes of tension and relaxation. She maintained that body weight should be used as an aid, not only to provide contrast in movement, but to give the body respite when required" (Cameron 1997, 14-15).

The syllabus has only been taught by a handful of teachers, the majority of whom were professional ballet dancers who studied the syllabus under Karsavina and were entrusted by her to teach it. After Karsavina, it was taught by Audrey Knight-Ellis until 1956, Claude Newman from 1956 to 1961, Keith Lester from 1961 to 1973, and Rachel Cameron from 1973 to 1996. Cameron taught and entrusted the syllabus to its current teacher, Joahne O'Hara, and O'Hara has the responsibility of choosing and mentoring her successor. At present, the syllabus is only taught to full-time RAD trainee dance teachers at RAD headquarters and is not available to teach or study more widely.

Such circumstances place the Karsavina Syllabus in a vulnerable position: firstly, its inclusion and significance as part of RAD dance teacher training is subject to periodic changes in programs of study and the extent of knowledge teaching staff have of the syllabus; secondly, despite the existence of both a Labanotation score and video recording of the syllabus, neither are integral to the teaching of the syllabus nor its transmission from one teacher to another. This seems somewhat paradoxical because a notation score and video recording are standard RAD syllabus materials, and all undergraduate students are taught basic Benesh Movement Notation and Labanotation. It highlights, however, the power that direct transmission from teacher to successor has had on the preservation of the syllabus so far, and the need to re-examine the syllabus and the Labanotation score from a critical and analytical perspective nearly 60 years on.



## The Karsavina Project

In 2010, former Director of Education of the RAD Professor Joan White initiated the Karsavina Project which aims to preserve the Karsavina Syllabus as part of the RAD's heritage and explore its educational potential within 21<sup>st</sup> century ballet teacher education to ensure its place in the future. As a teacher of Labanotation and movement analysis with research interests in documentation, preservation and education, I was invited to manage the project in close collaboration with Cameron and O'Hara.

In my initial research, it became evident that the historical and educational value of the Karsavina Syllabus lay not only in the syllabus content but also in the pedagogical approach which informs the teaching of it. My research, therefore, was driven by a desire to understand the ways in which history and legacy, preservation, and education can and do interrelate through the Karsavina Syllabus.

As I knew very little about the syllabus beyond the existence of Hutchinson Guest's score, I started with the syllabus as taught and practiced today. This involved two vital processes: the first was understanding the syllabus through Cameron's eyes as she was the only syllabus teacher alive who worked directly with Karsavina; the second was understanding the syllabus as embodied experience. The first found me seated with Cameron in front of a video recording of the syllabus, probing, deconstructing and evaluating each exercise, my understanding colored by stories of Cameron's own professional dancing and teaching career and the training she witnessed of others. The second found me standing uncomfortably at the ballet barre with our undergraduate students.

Cameron was a delight to work with; a tiny, charming lady with mischievous eyes and a generous smile, she shared her stories and knowledge willingly. We immediately found common ground with a dance language we shared: we spoke of tension and relaxation, giving in to and resisting gravity, connecting with the floor, driving the weight through space, breath phrasing and music phrasing, bodily articulation and spatial clarity. Although no longer able to dance, she demonstrated what she could and through her own expressivity I witnessed the syllabus very much alive and present in her own body. Through Cameron, I finally began to understand the basic principles of classical ballet, and my own psychological barriers with it started to break down.

In the studio, O'Hara used the same language to instill in us a deeper understanding of what each exercise was really about. For example, in the battements tendus and glissés, O'Hara emphasized what Karsavina called an "educated use of the foot", meaning that our feet should think for the body, working with the floor to achieve motion. She encouraged our feet to sense the floor, using tension and pressure to articulate the foot in each tendu, and then releasing the tension in the demi-plié to centralize the weight over both feet and give the body respite. This, of course, is pictorially clear in the simplicity of Hutchinson Guest's score: foot hooks describe the precise articulation of the working foot, hold signs indicate when the weight should be centralized over both feet, and the repetition of place low to place middle for the supports emphasizes respite between each tendu action. In my teenage years of syllabus-based classes, a tendu highlighted my lack of turn-out and flat feet, and I recall being prodded and stretched to achieve a more aesthetic line. In my adult training, self-consciousness pervaded every tendu I executed, but now I was experiencing the benefits of studying a notation score and analyzing a video recording in conjunction with embodying fundamental concepts anew. I was, effectively (and finally), being educated in the art of a tendu.

Like Cameron and Karsavina before her, O'Hara never counted the music; she emphasized the phrasing and quality, singing each exercise to highlight the texture she wished to see in the movement. More generally, in the various port de bras and pirouette exercises she elucidated the differences between the French and Bournonville Romantic styles and the Imperial style, and illuminated the expressive qualities in Fokine's particular neo-classicism. I also became aware of my own shift in focus from what my body should look like to what it should feel like in each exercise. Through my limited exposure to Karsavina's syllabus, my former syllabus-based training was revitalized as an education in principles of dance technique, historical context and flavor, and individual expressivity as appropriate to the form and functionality of my own dancing body. The experience was fundamental in changing my perception of classical ballet technique and perhaps more profoundly, my attitude towards my ability to dance it.

Aware that students currently learning the syllabus do not have opportunities to engage in contextual and analytical study of the syllabus, I proposed the creation of a Karsavina Syllabus resource to both preserve the syllabus as it is currently taught and to make new and existing materials relating to the syllabus more accessible.

**ROYAL ACADEMY OF DANCE**

**THE KARSAVINA SYLLABUS**

Port de Bras No. 1 (Fokine)

This exercise is the first of three ports de bras created for the centre practice and is in the neo-classical style of Russian choreographer Michel Fokine (1880-1942). As recorded in the video, it is currently taught with music by Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847). Click on the icons below to discover more. Drag open windows to move or re-size them and use pan and zoom to access details in the notation scores.

**Notes on Performance**

**HISTORY**

In the revised Combined Syllabus (as the Karsavina Syllabus was then known) compiled in January 1965, the Port de Bras No. 1 is written as follows:

Face croisé, weight on R foot

1. Walk L, R, L, diagonally to R, arms lifting slowly to 1st arabesque, head looking to R hand
2. Take weight back on to L foot, slight wrist movement
3. Chassé R back through 1st to arabesque croisé à terre, incline head to R arm
4. Take weight back on R foot, chassé L back through 1st to attitude à terre, arms through 1st to wide attitude, head turned to raised arm
5. Chassé L foot through 1st to dégagé in 4th devant with fondu, body fall forward over fondu, arms cross softly in front of chest and stretch out behind, head turned to audience and looking left
6. Close L in 5th in demi-plié, arms bras bas, demi-détourné to face croisé (facing L), arms 5th
7. Lower in soft demi-plié in 5th, arms swing softly across body
8. Posé de côté on L foot in arabesque (3rd) à terre, with good back bend, arms float up softly, elbows slightly bent, wrists relax upwards on last beat
9. Repeat starting with R foot

**Labanotation score 1976**

**THE KARSAVINA SYLLABUS**  
Port de Bras No. 1 (Fokine)

### The [Karsavina Syllabus Resource](#)

The Karsavina Syllabus resource, funded by the RAD, is an online, interactive multi-media archive which incorporates historical detail, images, Cameron's commentary on exercises, Karsavina's syllabus notes, the Labanotation score, music scores, alternative music tracks for exercises, video from multiple viewpoints, and video of O'Hara coaching students learning the syllabus. Although only a selection of material from the syllabus has been archived, students are already able to choose and access multiple media relating to those exercises at any one time, enabling them, for example, to watch a video alongside the Labanotation score, whilst making reference to syllabus notes and listening to Cameron's commentary.

Very little is written about the Karsavina Syllabus, but scrutiny of Karsavina's syllabus notes and other materials in comparison with Hutchinson Guest's score and what is currently taught reveals a clear timeline of changes and developments. It is evident, for example, that additional and alternative music for the syllabus was composed during Cameron's time as teacher and that an additional port de bras choreographed by Karsavina was added to the syllabus after Karsavina's death in 1978. It is also clear that details in the exercises have changed since Hutchinson Guest's recording of the syllabus as taught by Keith Lester in the early 1970s. In the Fokine Port de Bras, for example, the arm action in measures 7 and 8 of Fig. 1 is now a central lift of the right arm up to place high, which then drops to place low as the body sinks into the right hip as if sighing in despair. Although further research is required to determine the full extent of such changes and developments, their existence justifies the need to continue building the archive so that the life of Karsavina's syllabus can be better understood.

The resource was piloted in 2012 with BA (Hons) Ballet Education students, revitalizing interest in the Karsavina Syllabus and encouraging critical engagement with it as part of current ballet education studies. Joyfully, the resource has also instigated re-engagement with Hutchinson Guest's Labanotation score, and this generation of students can discover for themselves the value of active learning in symbiosis with doing syllabus class.

Further development and expansion of the resource depends on funding, but in the meantime I hope to capture the experiences of former students of the Karsavina Syllabus since it is through their voices that we can understand the significance of Karsavina's legacy as an educator. I begin this process here, with my own voice.

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- Cameron, R. 1997 An Investigation into and Examination of the Karsavina Syllabus. Unpublished BPhil Dissertation. London: Royal Academy of Dance.
- Hutchinson Guest, A. (not.) 1976. The Karsavina Syllabus of Classical Ballet Recorded in Labanotation. Unpublished Labanotation score. Chor. Tamara Karsavina, 1976, as taught by Keith Lester. London: Royal Academy of Dance.

## ***The Legacy of Hanya Holm: Don Redlich Remembers***

by Mary Anne Santos Newhall (Project Director, University of New Mexico)  
and Mary Corey (Notator)

### **Part I – The Project, by Mary Anne Santos Newhall**

In 2008, the University of New Mexico (UNM) performed Hanya Holm's *Rota* (1975). Mary Corey restaged the work from notation, and Don Redlich coached the student dancers. In 2010, UNM received a National Endowment for the Arts grant to document Holm's teaching theory and methodology. The second project resulted in a collection of DVD recordings, text and a Labanotation score of the fundamentals of Holm's movement theory.

### **Why Hanya Holm?**

A legendary pioneer of American modern dance and one of the foremost choreographers in the world, Hanya Holm came to the United States in 1931 from her native Germany to establish a branch school for Mary Wigman, the great German modern dance innovator. Holm won a place beside Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, as one of the "Big Four" founders of American modern dance. Holm traveled throughout the country with her own company in the late 1930s and early 1940s. In 1937 she created *Trend*, a work of epic scope about social destruction and rebirth, one of modern dance's greatest masterpieces. Other works followed, which Holm toured and presented regularly in New York. In 1948 she turned her attention to musical theater and after the success of *Ballet Ballads* and *Kiss Me, Kate*, she went on to choreograph 11 more Broadway hits, including *Golden Apple*, *My Fair Lady* and *Camelot*. Early on, Holm championed the study of Labanotation in the curriculum of her school and advocated its use to record choreographic works. Holm had *Kiss Me, Kate* notated for copyright in 1950 and it became the first such work to be accepted by the Library of Congress. She continued to produce concert choreography at Colorado College in Colorado Springs and directed the Colorado College Summer School of Dance for 43 years. She was a member of the faculty at the Juilliard School and the Nikolais/Louis Dance Theatre. Holm received all three national dance honors: the Capezio Award, the Dance Magazine Award and the American Dance Festival Scripps Award.

Hanya Holm has arguably been the least recognized of the pioneers of U.S. modern dance. She left neither codified technique nor a dance company dedicated to her choreography. Despite her great successes on the Broadway stage, her early modern dance roots — reaching back to Germany, Mary Wigman, Rudolf Laban and Emile-Jaques Dalcroze — are less known. A recent film documentary by Kathy Sullivan and writings by Claudia Gitelman and Tresa Randall have made Holm's biographical information available to students and scholars. Holm's final choreographies were made between 1975 and 1985 when she choreographed five works for the Don Redlich Dance Company. One of these, *Jocose*, was restaged by Redlich in 1993 and toured the world in the repertory of Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Project. Redlich remains a primary and direct source of her legacy as the result of their more than forty-year relationship.

The UNM Hanya Holm project was undertaken to explore Holm's movement theories. It was not intended as a codification of a "Holm technique." In this process, Redlich emphasized that for Holm, technique was a means to an end and she developed choreographic material through a highly sophisticated employment of improvisation. For Holm, technique class itself, while training the body (and she could be relentlessly exacting), was a preparation for improvisation and composition classes and for performance. She derived this methodology alongside her mentor, Mary Wigman. Indeed many of the fundamental concepts explored in the project related directly to Wigman's class content and teaching methodology as well as the ideas that Wigman had inherited from Laban and Dalcroze. The pedagogy of Wigman and Holm not only allowed but demanded the exploration of a range of possibilities that came to be employed by generations of dancers. Holm echoed Wigman's belief that the goal of dance training was not "to make little Mary Wigmans" nor replicas of Hanya Holm. Indeed, Holm inspired individual choreographers to pursue their own paths, armed with her succinctly analyzed fundamentals of dance theory. Behind Holm's clear, even simple movement concepts is the essence of dance composition that allowed her to move easily from the modern dance concert stage to the lyric theatre of Broadway and to opera. Her analytical approach to movement holds enormous value to dancers of today and the future. She was a true philosopher of the art of dance whose broad vision shaped her work as an educator and a choreographer. Holm's theory classes, especially in the more relaxed atmosphere that Redlich experienced during summers with Holm in Colorado Springs, offered time to delve deeply into what Holm perceived as the fundamental "stuff that dance is made of." Louise Kloepper, Valerie Bettis, Eve Gentry, Mary Anthony, Nancy Hauser, Glen Tetley and Alwin Nikolais were direct choreographic descendants of Holm and many more experienced her as a teacher and

choreographer. Hence our project title: *The Legacy of Hanya Holm: Don Redlich Remembers*. Rather than a definitive rendering of Holm, we offer her movement fundamentals from Redlich's uniquely informed perspective. Don Redlich's own teaching values are inextricably woven into this project. He is a master teacher who has developed his own methods over more than sixty years. In 1949, he traveled from Winona, Minnesota, for his first dance experience with Holm. In 1951 he entered the University of Wisconsin at Madison where he met his other great teaching mentors, Margaret H'Doubler and Louise Kloepper. Redlich's long and successful career as a performer, choreographer and teacher is a testament to the tools and concepts he gained from his time with H'Doubler and Holm and his decades steeped in the professional dance world of New York City. To be in the studio with him is a gift.

The project has far exceeded expectations. Rather than a single experience of historic choreography, it has opened a world of information that we hope will be revisited, explored, added to, argued with and mined over time.

### Why New Mexico?

Hanya Holm's influence was carried in many directions through her work with students and her dancers. Two of Holm's original company members settled in New Mexico. Elizabeth Waters came in the 1940s and established the dance program at the University of New Mexico. Eve Gentry came in the 1960s and continued to teach dance and the Pilates method until her death in 1994. Don Redlich made Santa Fe his second home in 1994. My work alongside Gentry in reconstructing her *Tenant of the Street* (1938) started me on the path of discovery of the roots of German dance in the family tree of American dance modernism. Gentry made *Tenant of the Street* while she was a member of Holm's company. Gentry studied Labanotation at the Holm school at the same time that she, Ann Hutchinson Guest, Janey Price, and Helen Priest Rogers established the Dance Notation Bureau. Gentry not only introduced me to a radical way of seeing dance, but also instilled a deep appreciation for the practical and historical importance of dance notation.

When American Dance Legacy Initiative at Brown University commissioned a notated score of *Tenant of the Street*, I met Mary Corey, who did the notation of that work. I have been grateful to work with her on a range of projects since then. After Gentry's death in 1994, I continued to research the connections between German and U.S. modern dance history and, in 2009, Routledge published my book [Mary Wigman](#). For me, the transmission of information from Wigman to Holm to Gentry was immediate and visceral. In 2007, I asked Don Redlich to consider which of the works that Holm choreographed for his company was most ripe for a restaging. He had already restaged *Jocose* for national and international stages. *Rota*, set to music by George Crumb, was the first work that Holm had made for the Redlich Company. It had not been seen for nearly 30 years. So we drafted a proposal to restage *Rota* at UNM. My interest in *Rota* grew and I realized it represented a return for Holm to her modern dance roots and was truly a physical archive of information about her choreography prior to her Broadway successes.

### Recovering *Rota*:

The 2008 restaging of *Rota* was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) American Masterpieces: Dance College Component, with matching support from UNM. Terri Richards originally notated *Rota* in the 1970s; however that notation was never used to restage the work. Reconstructor Mary Corey, Don Redlich and I worked with 10 UNM students to breathe life into the dance and to create new video documentation and augmented notation to add to the record of *Rota*. What became obvious in the restaging and documentary process of *Rota* was that more information was needed to make aspects of Holm's great legacy available to students of dance, now and for the future. While the reconstruction of *Rota* was essential to provide a living document of Holm's early German-American modern dance roots, her fundamental technique and integrated artistic philosophy remain in danger of sinking into obscurity.

**After *Rota*** – Don Redlich Remembers: Seeing this need, I proposed a successor project that the NEA funded as part of its American Masterpieces: Dance Initiative. Beginning in the fall of 2010, that grant made possible a range of project activities that became *The Legacy of Hanya Holm: Don Redlich Remembers*. Redlich gave one informal interview and conducted nine exploratory class sessions with MFA and undergraduate students from the University of New Mexico and other members of the New Mexico dance community. The goal of these classes was rediscovering and identifying Hanya Holm's fundamentals, as disseminated in her theory courses. The classes were video-recorded, catalogued and organized into the following elements:



1. Class structure: development of movement ideas through a class period;
2. Fundamental elements including: Space, Time, Energy (dynamics) and Improvisation leading to Composition;
3. Anecdotal information about Holm's teaching and Redlich's experiences.

The classes are recorded on 10 DVDs, one of which is Redlich discussing memories of his early studies with Holm. In March 2011, Redlich and I visited the New York Public Library to view Holm's archival materials. Redlich had provided funding to catalogue many of those materials and it was his first visit to see the results of that bequest. In Spring 2012, I developed a course at UNM (Dance History/Problems) dedicated to this project. Graduate students contributed to the development and documentation of the Holm project as well as a detailed Holm bibliography. These provided supplemental text to the video recordings and notation.

In the next phase of the project, Redlich and I with dancer Eliza Kuelthau drew out four more master classes and an improvisation study, all of which represent elements of Holm's theory classes. These were based on Redlich's memory of Holm's theory, as distinct from her technique classes. These classes were recorded and edited by videographer Jonathan Lowe and formed the basis of the notation score by Mary Corey. Because the entire process unfolded over the course of two years and demanded work in several locations, and also because the goal was to capture the most basic elementary material, Mary Corey agreed to notate the final material from DVD recordings. Although an unusual procedure, the simplicity of the material and the intention of the project made this process feasible. Corey, Redlich and I conferred in writing and by phone to clarify questions as they arose in the notation process.

The purpose of these DVDs and the notation is to pinpoint those elements central to Holm's artistic palette, including Space, Swing and Vibration. The entire collection of project materials, entitled *The Legacy of Hanya Holm: Don Redlich Remembers*, resides with the NEA, the New York Public Library's Jerome Robbins Collection and the University of New Mexico. A partial set including copies of the DVDs of the four master classes and the Labanotation score are housed at the Dance Notation Bureau.

## **Part II—The Labanotation score, by Mary Corey**

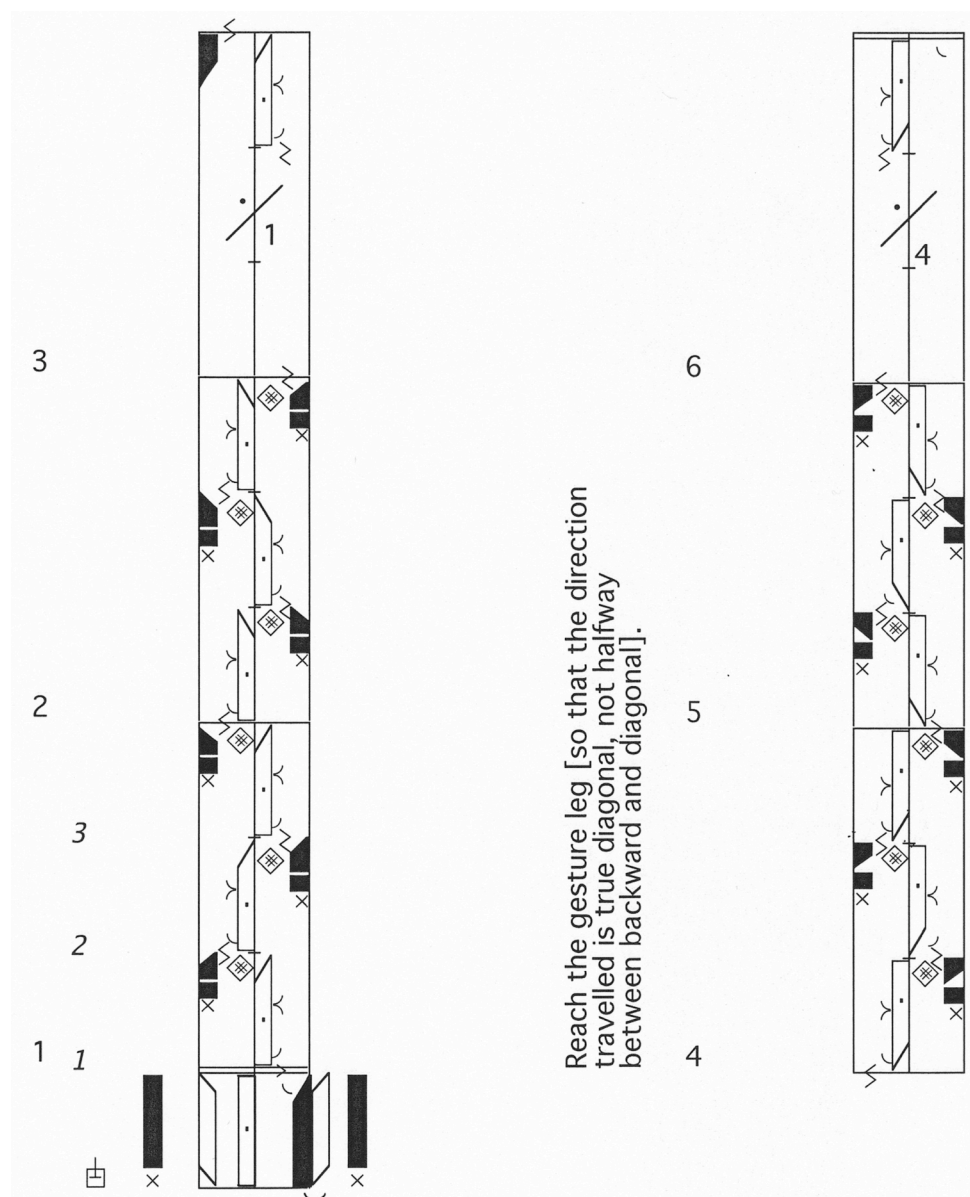
The Labanotation score associated with this project is made up of movement exercises taught by Don Redlich and notated in the order in which they appeared in each master class. In notating this material, I could not help but be struck by the concordance between the fundamentals of the Labanotation system and the foundational principles of Holm's movement theory, especially in the element of space. The master classes foregrounded the body's relationship to space and embodied that relationship through movement in clear directions that correspond to the Labanotation direction symbols: forward, back, right, left, up, down, and the four diagonals. I found the precise use of diagonal directional movements to be an especially distinctive feature of Holm's movement theory. In previous scores I have notated, diagonal directions are employed less often than other directions and used particularly when dancers need to adjust their traveling. In these cases, dancers disguise the diagonal motion in space—they present themselves as if traveling forward, backward or side but actually travel diagonally. However, in the Holm classes, the diagonal directions in space are overt and intentional, beginning with the diagonal fourth position of the feet, progressing to diagonal leg gestures, and culminating in diagonal traveling through space. Consequently, I used a much larger percentage of diagonal direction symbols in this score than in others.

The use of circular paths in Holm's movement theory aligns with Labanotation theory as well. The dancers are taught to maintain a relationship of the body to the center of a circle and a consistent step direction, as in Labanotation. This congruence means that the Labanotation symbols reflect the intention of the dancers' circling in a particularly complete way, because the circle itself in space, the body's relationship to it, and the direction of the step are all contained within the theory of circular paths in Labanotation. The symbol not only describes the movement, but also alludes to the underlying conception of the movement in Holm's theory.

Every notation project presents a unique working situation. In a typical scenario, a notator is present in the studio as the movement is taught and is therefore able to ask questions that arise and observe the answers in movement. This project was notated from DVDs of Redlich teaching class in Santa Fe, and so I accumulated my questions in California and emailed them to New Mexico. Although this process was less immediate than the traditional method, it was also interesting to notice that the inherent logic of the Holm work and its fundamental accord with Labanotation theory caused me to ask questions when a movement stood apart from concepts that had been presented previously. In a sense, the questions that came up confirmed the systematic approach that underlies Holm's theory.

This was my second experience notating one of the twentieth century's major modern dance theories. In the 1980s, I was the notator for Daniel Lewis's book, *The Illustrated Dance Technique of José Limón* (Harper & Row, 1984). Notating technique or theory requires a different focus than that required when notating choreographic works. Choreographers and staggers of theatrical works generally focus on choreographic elements. The challenges presented to notators of choreography include analyzing complex ensemble patterns, unusual partnering, knotty timing, and movements that are new to us, as well as adapting to revisions and alternate versions. When notating technique or movement theory, however, the details of the choreographer's underlying conception of movement is the focus. The teacher concentrates on the manner of moving, on the relationship between the performer and the environment, or on specifics of body part placement—that is, on the physical and conceptual foundations of a particular approach to movement.

That attention to underlying concepts of moving or dancing caused me to think more deeply about the many distinctive dance styles, techniques, and movement theories of the twentieth century—for example, those of Duncan, Graham, Humphrey, Cunningham, Dunham, Balanchine, and others in addition to Holm. I was inspired to devote a graduate seminar in dance history at the University of California, Irvine to several of these techniques, exploring them as enduring creative achievements and as historically significant in their own right. Although the techniques may have originated in tandem with the development of choreographic works, their impact on the way dancers move today is often independent of the dancer ever having performed the choreography. The theory reveals the artist's thought process about movement. And in this Labanotation score, the notation symbols align with the movement theory of the artist in a unique way.




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**Stepping in diagonal directions from *The Legacy of Hanya Holm: Don Redlich Remembers***

**Notation: Mary Corey**