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# DNB *ulletin*

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## DNBulletin

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## Entrances and Exits by Oona Haaranen

### *New Director of Programs Kristin Jackson Enters*

I started my dance training in the Philippines in traditional, ballet and modern dance before coming to New York in 1975. Since then, I have worked as a professional dancer and choreographer both nationally and internationally. I completed my MFA at New York University in 1985, while I was a dancer and rehearsal director with Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians from 1982-87. In 1990, Laura Dean asked me to return to reconstruct and coach five dances for the company's Joyce Theater season. One of them was her 1980 masterwork "Tympani," which Leslie Rotman had been asked to notate. Since Laura did not come into rehearsals until the dance was fully taught, the first part of the staging process involved only Leslie and me. Leslie asked a lot of detailed questions, which reinforced how I examined movement. She later said that I had a good eye for movement detail and that I should study Labanotation (LN). This was the first time I was exposed to notation. It was fascinating to observe how specific Leslie was in analyzing each movement phrase. For example, there was one phrase in which the movement of the arms did not only come from the shoulder sockets, but extended to the use of the whole back. This distinctive feature in Laura's work connected me deeply to my Philippine dance training, where a lot of the dances involved the use of the upper body, movement of the arms and the articulation of wrists and hands. I further realized this connection years later, when I received a Fulbright Scholar award in 2002 to teach at the University of the Philippines' Dance Program. It was a wonderful honor and gave me a profound sense of completion. This past year, Laura Dean received the H. Scripps/American Dance Festival (ADF) Award for Lifetime Achievement. As I was getting ready to go to ADF, I received an e-mail announcing the DNB position. Former Dean dancer Anne Wennerstrand, who knew Nancy Allison, suggested I apply and referred me to her. I came back from the festival in July, had my interview and here I am!

### *Welcome New Board Members*

**Chris Bregler**, Assoc. Prof., Computer Science, NYU, **Diana Byer**, Founder and Director of New York Theatre Ballet Company, **Joyce Greenberg**, former faculty of Adelphi Dance Department, notation professional through notator training. **David Hopkinson**, Accountant, **Elsa Posey**, former President NDEO, President National Registry of Dance Educators, founder and teacher of ballet at the Posey School on Long Island, **Lance Westergard**, Director of Dance Department, Hofstra University.

## Director of Programs Nancy Allison Exits

It was an honor to serve this organization for almost two years. *What did you learn while at DNB?* I learned a great deal about the Labanotation world and about how it interacts with the larger dance world. As director of programs I was responsible for five content areas: staging, notation, education, publicity and staff management.

In staging, my job was to license performances from the scores of the incredible DNB archive. Stagings bring the most attention to Labanotation in the larger dance world. We can honestly say that ten thousand people benefit annually from the DNB because there are approximately one hundred performances with an estimated average of one hundred people seeing each performance. That becomes important when you're applying for grants.

Another exciting thing that I oversaw was the Graham notation project. We were able to notate three solos and three group works during my term. It wasn't easy and it couldn't have happened without the amazing DNB staff and the Graham Company. If the dance world wants to continue collecting its history through LN, choreographers or companies need to take more responsibility for the economics and process of getting dances notated. There are many ways to do this. For example, hosting a notation project has extraordinary benefits for universities and their students.

In terms of education, the draft of the Style Manual was completed during my tenure. Edited by Lucy Venable, this volume that outlines every detail of how to write a score is a major step toward unifying the worldwide LN community. We were also able to open more of the DNB archive to LN-based educators through the Web Materials for Teachers project.

Publicity and communication, in general, underlie all other aspects of this job. The wonderful *New York Times* article of August '07 was a highpoint of my tenure. It didn't happen by itself. You have to nurture relationships with journalists just like choreographers, their heirs and the wider dance community. It's all about relationships. That's what I learned!

*What are your plans now?* I'm returning to my work staging Jean Erdman's dances. I'm also editorial director of Dance & Movement Press. Because of the work at the DNB I had to put that on hold. I'm getting back to it now. In the fall of 2009 we're releasing a biography of Alfredo Corvino by Dawn Lille.

## Report from the DNB

### NEA Award

The National Endowment for the Arts has awarded the DNB a \$20,000 grant toward a project to develop a Web-based searchable catalog of Labanotation dance score data. The internet accessible catalog will provide all indexing and descriptive information for each of the 769 theatrical dance scores in the DNB's collection. The interface will allow score information to be retrieved, sorted and presented in a manner that is most relevant to the individual's

interests. Work will begin on the project in February 2009 and we expect the online catalog to be available for use by January 2010.

### Staging News

The 2008-2009 fiscal year began with these exciting staging projects. This past July, audiences in Durham, NC were able to see Hanya Holm's *Jocose* (1981), staged by Sandra Aberkalns from a score notated by Terri Richards, and coached by Don Redlich on students at the American Dance Festival. In August, Doris Humphrey's *Water Study* (1928), was staged by Gail Corbin for The Yard in Chilmark, MA, followed by Antony Tudor's *Little Improvisations* (1953) staged by Robert Gardner for Minnesota Ballet in Duluth, MN in September. Both of these Tudor works were staged by arrangement with the DNB.

In November, Charles Weidman's *Atavisms: Lynchtown* (excerpt) (1936) was staged by Bridget Roosa, from Odette Blum's score, for Agnes Scott College at Decatur, GA. December brought about the staging of two more Humphrey works; *Day On Earth* (1947), staged by Paul Dennis by arrangement with the DNB, for the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, MA, and *Partita V* (1942), staged by Valerie Henry from Els Grelinger's score, and coached by Leslie Rotman for Franklin and Marshall College in Lancaster, PA.

This coming year 2009 will begin with a second staging of Antony Tudor's *Little Improvisation*, staged by Amanda McKerrow by arrangement with the DNB, for Principia College in Elsah, IL. In April, audiences in France will have the opportunity to see two Katherine Dunham dances, *Barrelhouse Blues* (1937-38) and *Choros I* (1941-43) as staged by Sylvie Duschene from Sandra Aberkalns' scores for La Compagnie James Carles in Toulouse. Two stagings of Humphrey's *Passacaglia and Fugue in C Minor* (1938) will also be seen in April. The first will be staged by Carol Burnham for the New World School of the Arts in Miami, FL and the second will be staged by Mino Nicolas for Goucher College in Baltimore, MD. Like the Tudor works, these Humphrey works will also be staged by arrangement with the DNB.

Two separate stagings of Yvonne Rainer's *Chair-Pillow Dance* (1969) will be seen in March and April respectively. Elizabeth McPherson at Montclair State University, NJ will stage the first and the second will be staged by Leslie Rotman and coached by Pat Catterson for Montgomery County Community College, PA. Both stagings will be using Valarie William's score.

Although there may be more yet to come before the end of this fiscal year, the DNB once again is delighted to support these companies, schools and individuals who keep these dance treasures alive and onstage!!

### Notation Projects

Notation Associate Mira Kim, continues to work on Peter Quanz' ballet *Kaleidoscope* (2005), which he staged on Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in April and which Kim is notating as her certifying score project. She is expected to complete it in 2010. Eleo

Pomare's *Las Desenamoradas* (1967) notation by another Notation Associate, Jennifer Garda, is still in progress. The work was staged by former Pomare dancers at Southern Methodist University this past August. This is also Garda's certifying score. Garda has finished her notation of *Daughters of the Lonesome Isle* (1945), which was staged by Nancy Allison for Oklahoma University in January 2008.

With Sandra Aberkalns' permission, Sylvie Duschene from Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris, will be incorporating any necessary changes to Sandra's scores for Dunham's *Barrelhouse Blues* and *Choros I*. These works were staged in August for La Compagnie James Carles of Toulouse, France and coached by Cleo Parker Robinson in October. Cleo's coaching brought new additions to the staging, which Sylvie will add to Sandra's existing score and return to the DNB when finished.

Work continues on the **Martha Graham Notation Project**. DNB Notation Associate Sandra Aberkalns has completed the score of *Primitive Mysteries* (1931). The notation is based on Yuriko's staging of the dance at Southern Methodist University in October 2007. Sandra is now working on the score of *Appalachian Spring*, as staged by Terese Capucilli on students at the Juilliard School in 2008. Mary Corey, a certified notator, has completed the Labanotation score of *Panorama* (1931). The notation was taken from Graham Company rehearsals of the dance at Skidmore College in June 2008. Ray Cook, also a certified notator, took notes during Graham Company rehearsals of *Celebration* (1934) that took place in NYC in November. The score is currently in progress.

## The Dance Notation Bureau Extension Update by Jessica Lindberg Coxe

The Dance Notation Bureau Extension, located on the campus of The Ohio State University (OSU), will be hosting the Labanotation Teacher's Certification Course (TCC) this summer, June 10<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>. TCC emphasizes varied approaches to teaching Labanotation and integrating notation across the curriculum. Prerequisites for the course include certification at the Elementary theory level (DNB exam), a course in Motif or Language of Dance®, and either a course in pedagogy/teaching methods or a minimum of 45 hours teaching experience in the studio or classroom. For more information, contact Dr. Sheila Marion, marion.8@osu.edu, or visit: [dance.osu.edu/dnbext/tcc.html](http://dance.osu.edu/dnbext/tcc.html).

Rachael Riggs Leyva's graduate project is an investigation of the documentation of the *Augmentation* duet from Tricia Brown's "M.O." (1995) to J.S. Bach's "Musical Offering." The work is being staged on two MFA candidates by visiting artists, and former Brown company member, Abigail Yager. Leyva says "[o]ne interesting issue regarding notating Trisha's work ... is that the *Augmentation* duet is based on a single phrase which is

performed forward, in retrograde, at varying speeds and with changing of fronts. These composition choices are also found in Bach's use of canon techniques. However, the dancers do not dance 'with the music,' but alongside it, meeting the music at prescribed moments. Portraying the music-dance relationship is another important issue for notating this duet." Leyva presented her work in a lecture / demonstration at OSU, January 22, 2009.

## Interview with Notator Mary Corey by Oona Haaranen

**What are you doing in terms of notation and teaching?** I just completed the notation of Martha Graham's 1935 *Panorama*. I enjoyed working on this piece. The biggest challenge was the floor plans because there are 33 dancers to account for. The floor plans were by far the most time consuming part. The work begins with everyone in the wings and dancers enter with simple walking and cross the stage. By the sixth measure into the work, 33 people are on stage crossing and circling each other.

In terms of teaching, I am a professor at the University of California, Irvine. I teach notation and dance history.

**What was your first notation experience?** My first notation experience was working with Senta Driver in 1981. She did a piece called *Missing Persons*. It was a very interesting and challenging first project.

**How did you get interested in notation?** I moved to NYC to study dance after graduating with my Bachelor's Degree in Dance. I became more aware of notation and became interested in it. I started taking classes at the DNB and got hooked and kept going with it. I did all my training at the DNB in New York.

**What is your favorite part of notating a work?** Being in rehearsal and watching staggers coach dancers to get the performance quality that they want. I enjoy seeing dances come alive in a rehearsal. When Sandra Aberkalns and I notated Jerome Robbins' *Dances at a Gathering* at San Francisco Ballet, just being in rehearsal with those wonderful dancers was inspiring.

**What is your approach to notating a work?** What I am hoping to accomplish with my notation is that my score is as clear as possible. I take a long time trying to simplify and clarify. I go through many versions of my notation of a phrase as I work through a score. I try to distill it down so that the person can grasp it quickly. I hope that it is not overly complicated, but as simple as it can be given the enormous complexity of human movement.

**What are the most memorable pieces you have notated?** I am usually most intrigued by the work that I just finished, which now is Graham's *Panorama*. Other works I've notated include Donald McKayle's *Rainbow 'Round My Shoulder*, Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments*, Daniel Nagrin's *Man of Action*, some dances by Isadora Duncan, and many others.

**What have been the most interesting moments in your work?** I find it interesting to hear and try to preserve the information about the intent of the work and the motivation for the dancers. What does the movement symbolize or how should the dancer approach it? I also enjoy working with the music score.

**What has been the biggest challenge in your work?** The biggest challenge for me is when the work is being taught very fast. You may have more than one person teaching a work, and that means that there may be more than one conversation going on in the studio at the same time.

**What is a notation project that you would be very interested in doing?** I have notated several dances over the years by the choreographic generation of 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's. I still find many of the works of the middle part of twentieth century quite moving. I enjoy the way they address human issues and stories. But I do not have a specific piece I would like to notate.

## Score of Morris Exercises by Jessica Lindberg Cox

Odette Blum began her studies at the Margaret Morris Movement (MMM) School at age 11. Margaret Morris (1891-1980) was a modern dance pioneer in the United Kingdom in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Blum recalled these classes as "the high points of my week." At 16, Blum was a member of Morris's Celtic Ballet and toured with the small professional company.

Ray Cook had often urged Blum to notate the MMM technique. Blum made contact with Jim Hastie, MMM teacher and Executive Director Emeritus of the International Association of MMM, in Scotland. Hastie invited Blum to the 2003 MMM Summer School to observe classes, jog her memory and notate the technique.

"[Morris] was a remarkable woman ahead of her time in many ways," says Blum. Morris began performing recitations at age 3. She studied ballet but preferred, and created, a freer movement form. In her late teens, Morris met Raymond Duncan (brother of Isadora) and learned from him the Greek positions, which, together with Hatha yoga breathing, became a basic part of her developing technique. Improvisation was included in every class she taught.

In 1910, she opened a school but continued choreographing and performing. Gradually she gained an increasing interest in teaching and in the health and remedial applications of her technique for the physically and emotionally handicapped. In 1925, Morris gave the first demonstration of her work with disabled children. She gained the support of orthopedists and other members of the medical profession who sent her patients for therapy.

Over the next 10 years Morris would publish her own dance notation, *Dance Script*, 1928; *Skiing Exercises*, 1934, *Tennis by Simple Exercises*, 1937, resulting from work with athletes; and *Maternity and Post-Operative Exercises*, 1935.

By 1939, her technique had spread to homes for disabled children, to Dr. Rollier's clinics in Switzerland, and she had schools in London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Paris and Cannes. With WWII, most locations were closed. Morris moved to the Glasgow school and started a dance company called the Celtic Ballet, which performed regularly during the war years. Morris created a technique to help ordinary people move well and tap into their creative abilities. She held the conviction that

dance needed to be a part of children's education; she saw dance as a beneficial therapy for the mentally and physically handicapped, and she felt that without a notation system dance would never be

considered equal to the other arts. Blum: "I am glad to have been able to notate her technique and contribute this aspect of her work to dance literature and to dance history."

Odette Blum will release her score of the first three levels of the Margaret Morris Movement technique in 2009.

## New Generation of Notators by Jessica Lindberg Cox

Mira Kim first learned Labanotation at college in Korea and continued her notation studies as a graduate student at the Ohio State University. After graduation, Kim began working at the DNB and, in 2005, began notator training.

By 2006, Kim was ready for the final step in the process of becoming a notator, completion of a certifying score. "I could select my certifying score, but it had to satisfy certain requirements related to difficulty. Works that fulfill these criteria are not easy to find but, in the end, I found one I am pleased with." Kim is notating Peter Quanz's *Kaleidoscope* (2005), based on Quanz's re-setting of the ballet on Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal in May 2008.

"*Kaleidoscope* is a 30 minute ballet with 22 dancers," states Kim, "so I was hesitant at first because the piece was so long and had a very large cast." While Kim enjoyed the aesthetics of the dance, the primary reason she chose *Kaleidoscope* was because its notation score would be used for staging. Kim recalls, "When I first met Peter [Quanz] at a DNB gala, he impressed me with his belief in the preservation of dance using the Labanotation system. As an independent choreographer, Peter wanted his works notated so they could be staged from the scores for different dance companies while he was choreographing new works."

"My notator training has been a tremendous learning experience, and has equipped me with the valuable skills to notate challenging pieces such as *Kaleidoscope*," says Kim. Mira Kim plans to complete the notation of *Kaleidoscope* in 2010.

## The DNB has moved

The DNB has moved its offices from midtown to lower Manhattan on January 29, 2009. Our new address and contact numbers:

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## Digging Deeper

For more in-depth information about the articles in this newsletter check the DNB website at <http://www.dancenotation.org> or the dnblog at <http://dancenotation.blogspot.com>