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Honored by our Own

The Dance Heritage Coalition, representing the nation’s leading dance libraries and collections, has named the DNB one of *America’s Irreplaceable Dance Treasures: the First 100*. We are honored to stand with so many artists whose work we have written.

The good news is that of the 61 choreographers and/or works listed, 31 are in our collection. The other news is that 30 more, of those most valued by the field itself, have yet to be recorded and thus guaranteed the highest standard of preservation for the future. DNB notators have demonstrated over 60 years the capabilities of Labanotation. Our inclusion in this list demonstrates that the field values it. We have every hope of extending our collection to include the missing artists, and others as well, and by this to keep their works available and alive for all time.

It is not for us, but for dance, that we work.

Spotlight: Saving America’s Agnes de Mille

The first work undertaken in the *Save America’s Treasures* project is *Gold Rush*, a group of dances that Agnes de Mille pulled from *Paint Your Wagon*.

Billie Mahoney is notating a production mounted on SMU students in Dallas, TX by Gemze de Lappe, long-time colleague of de Mille, and her last assistant, Diana Gonzales.

Mahoney’s special challenge was that the dancers learned most of the material off videotape. She enjoys recording de Mille’s dramatic variety: “[the roles] all have different personalities, drawn in different subtleties. Gestures are repeated with different qualities and meanings; a soft touch written as a sliding caress becomes a slap. I had to do character analysis along with movement analysis.” SMU’s Patty Harrington Delaney, just finished herself with the Notator Training course work, said of the rehearsals, “Gemze is so clear about the intent—she yanks them out of [plain] technique with her vivid imagery and repetition until she sees the drama.” Delaney also noted how valuable Mahoney’s expertise in notating tap proved to recording de Mille’s Irish-influenced rhythmic material. The choreography also involves a jump-rope dance and rope swinging.

The de Mille legacy is vital to both ballet and musical theater. *Save America’s Treasures*, funded from a special Congressional appropriation, enables us to expand her legacy with a 4th work recaptured with the detail of expert memory and scored for all its known and unsuspected heirs.

DNBulletin

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Profile

a series on DNB staff whom you may know only by phone or e-mail

You are likely to get your first DNB greeting from Bob Shapiro, who ambles out from the Library to offer a sociable welcome and usually a good joke. If you spend some time here, you will sooner or later find him out at the great central notation table, examining reading samples or sitting in on someone's brush-up theory session. Bob is taking the Elementary course from Ilene Fox as a sort of correspondent-in-residence, drawing on the DNB's folk dance collection. The expertise he built over 33 years of folk dancing and teaching permits Ilene to incorporate more advanced theory, for complexities of hands slapping the thigh, or flexion/extension, or the favored fist-clenched-at-the-back-of-the-waist, which signifies Serbian "opposition to the [Ottoman] Turk" called for by his material. He promises moderation in his learning pace: "I'm staying away from couples dancing (for the moment)."

Bob has lived in 7 states, during 5 careers. He loves cities best, and of cities San Francisco. But the land he really lives in with his wife Elaine is the folk dancers' world. He followed his older brother into it, at a time when folk dance was popular on campuses—Berkeley once offered 13 sections in its Physical Education program—especially among graduate students and computer students. These were soon Bob's own categories. After a year as a music major he switched to math, in which he has two degrees from Michigan and Maryland. He has been a math teacher for aspirant nursing students in Washington DC.; an accountant in Massachusetts in the nuclear medical field and in California for businesses including the California

Historical Society, tax preparers and individual tax payers; and, with a MLS earned in Texas, librarian in the Flatlands branch of the Brooklyn Public Library. Along the way he developed an abiding interest in computers. He bought his first computer in 1979, and reminds the born-yesterday generation that when he got into it, at the University of Texas, the Internet was only available through a government or college connection. The folk dancers, of course, were connected right away.

Bob and Elaine, who met through folk dancing, remain very active, attending sessions several times a week and offering an impromptu lesson for the DNB staff when we visited them in Valley Stream to inspect Bob's barbecuing skills. Aside from cooking, he follows theater and ballet in the city as a season subscriber, and maintains a sizeable collection of mysteries, especially by Lawrence Sanders and Emma Lathen, and of the vintage fiction of P.G. Wodehouse.

He was an unscathed survivor of the 1989 San Francisco earthquake: he says equably, "we had just moved in, and our stuff wasn't unpacked yet, so it was all safe. It couldn't fall off anything."

Our good fortune, too.

Notation Teachers' Website

The inaugural meeting this summer of the new Alliance of Dance Notation Educators identified a need for more teaching materials. In response, a Teachers' Materials Bulletin Board is being added to the DNB website. Spearheaded by Charlotte Wile, Patty Harrington Delaney and Barbara Bashaw with web hosting and technical support from Southern Methodist University, it

will contain classroom materials that can be downloaded and used. Notation teachers are invited to send in items; instructions will be posted for how to submit. Working together, our community can build a new library of materials enriching our students' educational experience.

Among the kinds of materials that may be submitted are readings, lesson plans, teaching strategies, philosophical discussions, excerpts from published materials, and ideas for integrating notation into the dance curriculum. Watch for our announcement that the bulletin board is up and running.

The Library

Bob Shapiro has been upgrading the information on notated theatrical dances available on the website, planning to add a status field for score users to determine which works are still in progress or are complete and ready for mounting. Technology Advisor Scott Sutherland is working with him to get the catalog on line in searchable format.

A finding list for the Helen Priest Rogers papers is nearly complete. Bob's favorite find in the collection is a poignant note on an undated meeting about the future of the Graham school and company, posing (but not answering) some key questions: "Who is in charge of what?" "Provisions for performance rights after Graham? After company?"

Extension News

LabanWriter 4.0, 5 years in the making, was released in March and may be downloaded at www.dance.ohio-state.edu. It can also be obtained by mail upon sending 2 disks to the Extension at

1813 North High St., Columbus OH 433210.

For her Notator Certification score, Valarie Mockabee is recording Bebe Miller's *Prey* with a companion CD-ROM documenting the Labanotation with photos, text and digitized video of Miller teaching. There are also examples of improvisation tasks, rehearsal notes and discussions with the choreographer.

The Extension will host this summer's International Council of Kinetography Laban conference July 26-August 2. Right afterwards it will present a motif symposium titled "Symbols of our Community....Moving Forward with Motif" August 2-4, 2001, co-sponsored with Motus Humanus and the Language of Dance Centre. Further information on both events, including how to register, will be available in the next newsletter.

Earl Ubell on Past and Future

At our 60th anniversary celebration, one man featured in many of our shared stories. Earl Ubell came on the DNB Board in 1966. In 34 years of extraordinary loyalty he has seen it all—creation of the OSU Extension; creation and later outsourcing of the school and bookstore; major grants for the recording of Balanchine and Tudor; and the development of a Labanotation typing element, of computer software and of the interface that will permit you to see animated realization of your scores. He was there for five Executive Directors and five office addresses and not a few of the crises that burn out other directors. These he viewed with a lighter heart than some: "I discovered the financial organization of the Bureau was strangely...daring." He personally wrote some of the most important and effective

articles about the DNB's work for the *New York Times* and other publications. And he spread word in his sizeable circle of influence about the aspects of LN that would interest them.

Trained as a physicist, turned journalist, Ubell watched his wife Shirley, a noted New Jersey dance teacher, using graphic designs to make notes. She showed him the Labanotation textbook and introduced him to Lucy Venable, who asked him to join the Board. After he left off reporting to become News Director of Channel 4, he "had time to do other things and pay more attention to the DNB." He became Chair and brought his valuable energy to bear on advancing the use of the system. One of his special interests was inducing dancers in companies to learn to read their roles, which he argued would save significant rehearsal costs. The project was briefly executed at Ballet Syracuse, though it fell prey to dancer turnover. Earl still cites the literate company as part of the Bureau's destiny, along with computerization, the part which has been fulfilled. "Another thing I tried to get across [was that] critics can write better work if they can read notation, as music critics routinely do."

Along with his belief about the DNB's destiny, Earl cherishes two specific achievements. After the computer project, he is proudest of the project which saw notation of 15 Balanchine works. "We held a press conference to announce the project completion and I cried. We as a Board had achieved what Boards are supposed to do... It was our apotheosis." This reflects his generosity, also tangible in his comments on DNB colleagues: "Ann Hutchinson Guest, Mickey [Topaz] and Ilene [Fox] were the strengths. Also Ray Cook. He is the ideal: a dancer, choreographer, restager and notator all in one. What I'd like to see is the dance field full of Ray

Cooks...Lucy deserves the Nobel Prize in Dance for her computer work."

Asked why he stayed so long, he said simply, "I wanted to see the end. There is so much to be done. We liked each other on the Board. We didn't want to leave the work undone." There is always more to do, and he's still here.

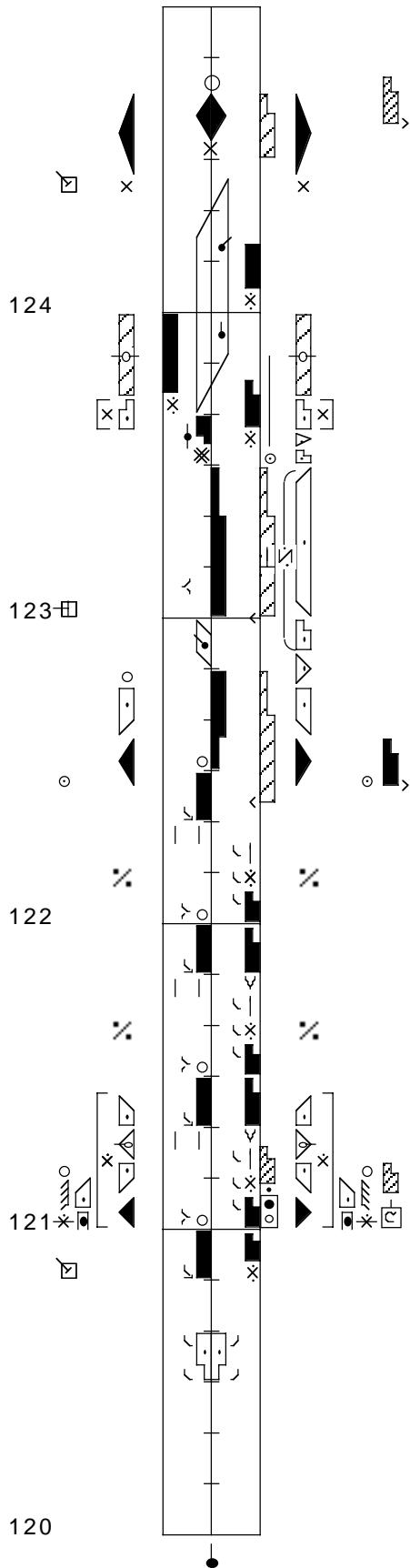
Restaging Assistance Available

Dance/USA has announced a funding opportunity, the National College Choreography Initiative (NCCI) to bring American dance masterworks to college, university and conservatory dance programs across the country. Restagings from score are eligible for NCCI support. A letter of intent to apply is encouraged by 12/1/2000, and guidelines may be obtained from NCCI c/o Dance/USA, 1156 15th St. NW suite 820, Washington DC 20005, or call Suzanne Callahan at 202/955-8325.

DNB Presence in DC, Tokyo

Ilene Fox and Sandra Aberkalns both presented papers at the July conference *Dancing in the Millennium*, whose steering committee was co-chaired by DNB Board member Dawn Lille Horwitz. Fox discussed the progress of the Interface software in development, and Aberkalns, who is increasingly prominent at scholarly conferences, introduced her groundbreaking use of color in a notation score to denote varying levels of choreographic control specified by William Forsythe for dancers of his double duet *Artifact II*. Aberkalns used a CD-ROM prepared by Robin Hoffman to illustrate her points with extra vividness.

Fox lectured on the Interface project in Tokyo in August to a Global Assembly of the World Dance Alliance.



*excerpt from the "Lonely Men" section of Agnes de Mille's
GOLD RUSH. The male solo sequence expresses the
frustration of men on the Western frontier with no feminine
company*

score in progress by Billie Mahoney (see story on page 1)

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