



DNB Bulletin

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Dance Notation Bureau New York

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DNB's Broadway

On Monday March 12 the DNB threw a benefit party at the home of Board Treasurer Lynne Weber to celebrate its Broadway scores.

This year we honored the 10 show scores we have produced, by choreographers ranging from Gower Champion to Geoffrey Holder, and those that we are preparing to write under the *Save America's Treasures* grant. Billie Mahoney reminisced about working on Jack Cole technique material and talked about writing tap. Patty Harrington Delaney spoke on the restaging and notation project of Agnes de Mille's *Gold Rush* that she directed at Southern Methodist University. Sandra Aberkals gave a presentation about what the notator's eye can contribute to helping lay audiences see more in dance, a topic suggested by Board member Caryn Leland. A fascinating discussion arose among the professional notators about methods they use to deal with rehearsal challenges, such as the need to record multiple trial versions as they are devised and discarded.

For the next Broadway score, the DNB is in negotiations with Ann Reinking, close associate of Bob Fosse, to notate part of her production of *Fosse*, now enjoying successful runs on Broadway and in London's West End.

Savion Glover's work is also planned for the aptly named *Treasures* undertaking.

Disappearing Legacies

We are seeing new challenges to preserving the dance of the last 50 years. The deaths of Anna Sokolow, Erick Hawkins and Lucia Dlugozewski, and controversy over artistic guidance of the Martha Graham and other great repertoires, all point up the fragility of our heritage. Repercussions of earlier losses are now becoming evident. Works are going off the stage, and it may be for good.

Anna Sokolow left many of her dances protected. She had 19 pieces notated, along with fostering the dedication of Jim and Lorry May, who will continue her Player's Project.

She lived the dream of an artist to have her work notated by someone who had learned it from and performed it for her; 10 Sokolow works were written by company member Ray Cook. Cook has been associated with the DNB for some 40 years as a Certified Notator, restager and teacher, and scored his own choreography and works by Arpino, Balanchine, Humphrey, Wagoner, Fokine and Limon. His introduction, in the published version of Sokolow's *Ballade*, eloquently recounts the transition he made

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from being a ballet dancer to one with the rebellious and expressive abilities that this choreographer needed. Ilene Fox comments, "The DNB's vision for the future is to train retiring dancers and send them back into their companies as notators, so it's the family that is recording the repertory."

The DNB plays a key role in keeping works alive: as recording agent, repository, and often as restager. We always note that Doris Humphrey's dances are on stage more often now since her death than in her own lifetime, in productions mounted from score that are regularly applauded for their faithful artistic standard. Humphrey's vision in getting her work notated protected her contribution to the art form. Other choreographers have made sure of comprehensive notation of their life's work, especially George Balanchine, Paul Taylor and Antony Tudor. Erick Hawkins' dance technique has been notated for Renata Celichowska's book.

The field needs all of its artists to follow Sokolow's example and back up their legacies for the permanent record, to keep their work on stage.

Spotlight: Leni Wylliams, With a Little Help From His Friends

Leslie Rotman is completing the score of *Sweet in the Mornin'*, a solo choreographed and once danced by Leni Wylliams that is being rescued under unusual circumstances. Wylliams' unexpected death cut off a twenty-year career that his teachers and friends recognized for its exceptional promise, and a group of them took steps to save one work, as a start, out of the many he made that they cherished.

Wylliams was a student of Cleo Parker Robinson in Colorado who went

on to study and dance with Eleo Pomare. He also worked with Talley Beatty, Rod Rodgers and the Netherlands Dance Theater. He intended this as a tribute to Beatty and Pomare (Brooks said, "what Leni wasn't born with, Eleo gave him: arms moving like a bird."). To this end Wylliams used the movement vocabulary associated with Pomare. This helped the rescue team of Pat Brooks, Dyane Harvey, Ray Steehler, Germaul Barnes, Bruce Hawkins and Pomare determine that the dance could be restaged from video, on both Barnes and Harvey, under Pomare's coaching. Rehearsal space was donated by Judson Church and Azzia.

It was Brooks' and Barnes' idea to have the work notated during the two week rehearsal period. Barnes said, "I studied notation at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, and I knew this is the way college dancers can get access to a work and continue its life." Brooks notes, "You can see it on film, but you cannot get the essence" without a score.

Wylliams' friends want this dance to be used. The solo will be available without fee or royalty, the only requirement being to arrange final coaching by Pomare and Harvey. They would like to recapture and notate more of the large repertory Wylliams made for a number of companies (including the two he directed himself); they also look ahead to notating the work of more African American artists.

Rotman met Pat Brooks when both were working with Cleo Parker Robinson's company. She relished the rehearsal process, which also involved Notator Trainee Patty Harrington Delaney. "It was good for us. Eleo is very generous in the rehearsal situation. He encouraged Patty and me to be very involved, asking if we were getting what we needed. He is so forthcoming about style and emotion: it was a rich experience, which makes the score rich."

The Library

With regret the DNB took leave of Librarian Bob Shapiro, who has moved to Topeka, Kansas. Bob oversaw a number of signal advances here, including reorganization of the book collection, and he will be very much missed.

Jill Cirasella, MLIS, has been appointed the new Librarian. She spent a week of orientation with Bob in February, and arrives full-time in the spring. During the interregnum the Library work will be covered by Gina Jacobs.

Helen Priest Rogers bequeathed much of her dance book collection to the DNB, intending that books not needed were to be sold for the Bureau's benefit. Culling and preparation of these books, along with duplicates from our general collection, is now complete. Watch the LabanTalk listserv for the sale, and fill out your own collection with some titles that are now frequently hard to find.

OSU Extension News

Valarie Mockabee is restaging Paul Taylor's *Three Epitaphs* from score under the DNB 60th Anniversary Repertory Project. The piece will be coached by former Taylor dancer Victoria Uris of the OSU dance faculty. Another restaging, for May performances, is Lin Hwai-min's *Legacy: Crossing the Black Water*, directed by Sheila Marion.

John Giffin created and danced a "movement commentary" on Arnold Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* for OSU's Contemporary Music Festival 2001 at the Wexner Center in February.

Registration information is out for two summer notation conferences at Ohio State. For the ICKL program, July 26-August 2, register on line at

www.ickl.org. The symposium “Symbols of our Community...Moving Forward with Motif” will follow immediately, August 2-4. You may register for this one either by e-mailing the Language of Dance Center’s Tina Curran at *tinalodc@aol.com*, or by writing to Motus Humanus through Jimmyle Listenbee, Dance, San José City College, 2100 Moorpark Ave., San José CA 95128-2799.

Sheila Marion is creating web-based tutorials for the core basics of LN, with Dance Preservation Fund support. These will be accessible through the OSU Dance homepage for anyone coming across LN on the Internet. She has technical and design support from Graduate Associate Rachel Boggia .

Honorary Board Formed

11 former Board members have joined a new Honorary Board at the DNB. Chaired by Nancy King Zeckendorf, long-time President and charismatic MC of the 60th Anniversary celebration, the board includes Odette Blum, Sally Brayley Bliss, Selma Jeanne Cohen, Stuart Hodes, Marjorie Isaac, Murray Louis, Billie Mahoney, Nadia Chilkovsky Nahumck, Jeannette Paladino, Jeanne Ruddy and Norman Singer. The DNB is fortunate in their renewed commitment.

Hines Taps Mahoney

Veteran Notator and tap dancer Billie Mahoney took a break from her work on the Agnes de Mille score to catch a performance featuring master tap experimentalist Gregory Hines in Kansas City in September. She was astonished to hear Hines announce to the audience “we hear Billie Mahoney is out there. She’s a legend in tap dance. Come on up

here, Billie”. She reports she amazedly complied, and found herself jamming with Hines, in high heeled shoes and evening dress, before a delighted audience. Regrettably she neglected, in the heat of the moment, to get rough notation of what she and Hines fired at each other.

Three months later Mahoney, who runs regular tap classes in town, received a WOW (Wonderful Older Women) award from Kansas City’s Older Women’s League.

LN as a Language

by guest writer *Sandi Kurtz*

One of the bonuses of the Internet is the opportunity it gives us to “talk” with each other regardless of time and geography. Conversations that used to take place only at conferences or workshops can stretch out over a series of days, in virtual rather than actual space. Last autumn the LabanTalk listserv hosted a discussion about notation and the nature of language that explored several different points of view about the topic.

The core question—is Labanotation a language?—garners several different answers depending on your definition of language. The dictionary meaning (“a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventional signs, sounds, gestures or marks having understood meanings”) doesn’t seem to apply very directly to movement notation, which works more clearly as a recording device. Beyond the linguistics model, though, the discussion touched on the uses of language; and taking the pragmatic viewpoint (that language gives you access to ideas or bodies of knowledge), most people seemed to agree that notation can offer a kind of insight into a dance work that is almost impossible to experience

in any other way.

If these issues intrigue you, the conversation is archived on the DNB website, *www.dancenotation.org*. on the theory discussion bulletin board. Look for yourself and “reconstruct” a great discussion.

Goodbye, Earl, and Thanks

After 35 years of tireless ambassadorship for the work of the Dance Notation Bureau, Earl Ubell has retired from the Board. Muriel Topaz reflected on his support for the establishment of notation, and how powerfully he encouraged the DNB notators and staff:

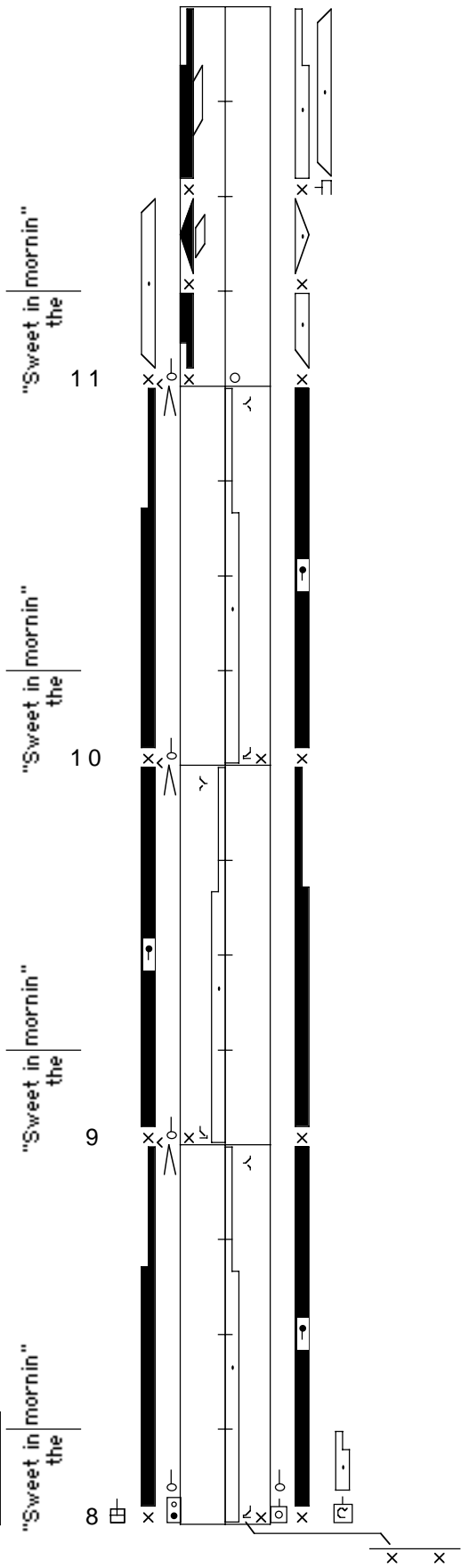
“Earl Ubell is a treasure. His years of loyal service to us have brought immeasurable benefits. He has been a guiding light from the earliest days, through good times and crises. He opened our minds to new technological pathways which we might never have envisioned without his leadership.

During the years that it was my honor to direct the DNB, Earl was always there for me, goading, pushing, listening, helping, advising; providing a shoulder to lean on, supporting us morally, financially and in every other way one can name. The value of his stalwart and optimistic participation cannot be overestimated. While we respect and understand his need to step down now, we don’t have to like it! Thanks for everything, Earl.” So say we all.

Staff Publications

Look for Sandra Aberkalns’ article, “Dancing to the Future” in the March issue of *Dance Teacher*. Ilene Fox is preparing an article for *Dance Magazine*’s forthcoming College Guide.

Hover, float
like a
sculpture
moving in
space.



*opening phrase from Leni Wylliams'
SWEET IN THE MORNIN'*

*score in progress by Leslie Rotman:
see story on page 2*

Like a slow
motion run
coming out of
the darkness.