



# Bulletin

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Dance Notation Bureau New York

**INSIDE**

11 September 2001 . . . . .	1
New Board Leadership . . . . .	1
A Team for Robbins Project . . . . .	1
Spotlight: When the Memory- Based Restager is Notation-Trained . . . . .	2
Profile . . . . .	2
Alliance of Dance Notation Educators . . . . .	2
Notator Hired for German Company Staff . . . . .	3
The Library . . . . .	3
OSU Extension News . . . . .	3
Broadcast News . . . . .	3
Fox to Address Brazil Conference . . . . .	3

**11 September 2001**

We were moved and comforted by the worldwide expressions of concern we received about the dreadful attack on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and America. Our staff members were all safe and none lost family or personal friends. They carried on bravely, moving immediately to donate blood and offer help as far as was possible. The shock has been overwhelming; many of us live within view of the lost Towers and all of New York is wounded profoundly.

Our staff has responded with a renewed sense of mission. We have become more conscious than ever of the role we play in protecting this most fragile of arts. With your help we will carry forward this work, to keep the dance heritage intact for a future that now looks less secure.

**New Board Leadership**

The DNB Board of Directors installed a new slate of officers at the June meeting. Lynne Weber assumes the Chair, with Sheldon Soffer as President, Hillary Gal as Treasurer and Senta Driver as incoming Secretary. Ann Hutchinson Guest continues as Honorary President and Earl Ubell has been named Chair Emeritus. The 17 member board includes

Directors with credentials in law, finance, architecture, medicine, higher education, professional dance and journalism. Fully 9 of them are notators.

**A Team for Robbins Project**

Years of ground work by Ann Hutchinson Guest, Francis Mason and others have finally brought about the DNB's first opportunity in decades to record a major work by Jerome Robbins, supported by the Congressional grant *Save America's Treasures*. In late September rehearsal began on the San Francisco Ballet's production of *Dances at a Gathering*, staged by Susie Hendl and Victor Castelli.

An unusual feature of the project is that the ballet masters planned to teach male and female roles separately, and simultaneously, in different areas of one studio. This required sending a pair of notators to collaborate on the score. Mary Corey and Sandra Aberkals were the appointed team, and their approach was carefully coordinated and adjusted as they went along. The complex challenge they met will be reported in more depth in the next newsletter.

**DNBulletin**

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## Spotlight: When the Memory-Based Restager is Notation-Trained

The scoring of Choo-San Goh's *Beginnings*, as mounted on the New York company DanceGalaxy by Janek Schergen, is a unique event for the DNB. It is the first collaboration of a notator with an artist who is himself a notator, though he was staging this piece from memory.

Sandra Aberkalns makes a practice of keeping informed on upcoming productions and notation opportunities involving dances, especially small-scale ballets, for which Leslie Rotman reports growing demand in the University community. Professional Advisory Council members also tell the DNB of a constant need for more material in score. Aberkalns' connection with Galaxy Directors Judith Fugate and Medhi Bahiri led to our first Forsythe score and an ongoing partnership with notation-friendly directors whose repertory would be attractive to a number of other small ballet groups (*Beginnings* has a cast of four).

Aberkalns remembered conversations with Goh in which he expressed unusual confidence in notation's power to preserve intact his original choreographic intentions. He seemed to understand that the notator would be writing what he had wanted to see, rather than what dancers were making of it in performance. This trust likely resulted from a positive experience with the 1980 scoring of his *Celestial Images*, by Jane Marriett.

Schergen is himself a Certified Benesh Notator, though as the late choreographer's representative he works from his own notes [interestingly, he did not use a shorthand Benesh] and personal knowledge of the repertory. Aberkalns

said his notation training shows. In all her years with stagings, she has never encountered anyone with Schergen's precision, clarity in showing and describing movement, and consistency in repeating complex actions. Though he used no notation terms as such, his explanation had a clear and concise quality. "He saw the physical images as if in symbols; he was so detailed and exact about where it goes and how to get there," she recalls. She relished being able to frame questions in notation terms, to a director equally familiar with movement analysis. "I could ask him, 'about the arms, is it *contraction* or a *folding*?'", and while these were Labanotation and not Benesh terms, he understood and answered in dancer's language. He knew why a notator would ask for such a detailed distinction; he could give me one". In a curious coincidence, Schergen told Aberkalns he had been given her own notation of *Great Galloping Gottschalk* on one of his Benesh exams.

Aberkalns has written in more detail about this project for *Dance Insider*, whose website carries her article ([www.danceinsider.com](http://www.danceinsider.com)).

## Profile

*a series on DNB's people*

Mira Kim arrived at the DNB in August, recommended by Sheila Marion to take up the transferring of scores into LabanWriter formerly done by Gina Jacobs, who is now at the Dance Collection. She is currently working on Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*.

Kim is from Seoul and came upon Labanotation during a basic course in Laban Movement Analysis. She describes herself as having been "shocked" at first to realize that

movement could be written, then eager to learn how it works. Temporarily sensing that notation might be of limited interest to her, she was persuaded again by a Directing from Score course, where she saw works coming to life.

Kim managed to teach herself Elementary and Intermediate LN, working alone in Korea from Ann Hutchinson's text, and then located Sheila Marion at the OSU Extension on the web, arranging to take her exams and to be admitted into the OSU graduate dance program. She is the only student admitted through a videotape, after visa delays prevented her from reaching the auditions. She took her MA focussing on notation. Kim remains an active dancer and would like to explore choreographing, but says her future plans may also include Notator Training. She was in New York for only a month before meeting the catastrophe of September 11, but her natural initiative and courage showed up again in a steady and composed determination to stay with us and keep going forward.

## Alliance of Dance Notation Educators

Ilene Fox and Patty Harrington Delaney have summoned the community of dance teachers using notation to a new Alliance established by the DNB and chaired by Delaney. The first organizational meeting was held at the Millennium 2000 conference. The DNB and Southern Methodist University launched a web library of teaching materials that can be downloaded and used. At the summer ICKL conference Fox and Delaney held a 2 day focus on dance notation education, and a working group emerged to plan the next moves. Small group meetings were also held with overseas visitors to ICKL, to encourage a truly international reach for

the group. More materials suited to the web library, which is hosted by SMU and accessible through our own website, are actively solicited.

## Notator Hired for German Company Staff

The Stephan Thoss Dance Company, based at the Niedersachsen State Opera in Hannover, Germany, has appointed a staff Labanotator, Thomas Schallmann, to record its new work and restage scored works by other choreographers. Thoss, a choreographer experienced in several German opera houses, studied KIN/LN himself with Patricio Bunster, a Leeder and Jooss alumnus. Schallmann trained with Maria Szentpal and the Folkwang Hochschule in Essen, and has taught notation in Leipzig and Dresden. He gave the company dancers an introductory presentation as a good start to a relationship we hope more companies will undertake.

## The Library

The sale of Helen Priest Rogers' books has raised \$3400 to date for the DNB; a new list of the books still available will be issued soon.

The gift of full Adobe Acrobat software by Board member Alice Moorhead has enabled Jill Cirasella to make substantial improvements in the website. The newsletter is now on line, and the Notated Theatrical Dances catalog can be updated regularly. Registration forms will be seen in our own formatting. Charlotte Wile is working on the possibility of posting research and theory articles useful to advanced notators.

Cirasella has two articles coming in professional library journals:

"At Odds?: Privacy and Archives" in *Current Studies in Librarianship* and "The Asymmetric Traveling Salesman Problem: Algorithms, Instance Generators and Tests" in *Springer Lecture Notes in Computer Science*.

Redesign of the website will soon be complete with the signal contribution of Marion Bastien, notator/teacher and web designer based in Paris. Bastien generously volunteered her help, not knowing she would have to give it during a ferocious New York heat wave and the collapse of the DNB air conditioning. She assisted Jill from the spring by mail and spent 3 weeks at 30th Street after the ICKL conference. She was unflappable during the ordeal by humidity, observing that France was not as dependent on air cooling as we have become; all the same the DNB deeply regrets the staff's discomfort and notes its loyalty in staying at desks that were very nearly on fire.

## OSU Extension News

The ICKL conference was a great success, with one of the largest attendances (more than 60) and representation from Canada, Europe, the UK, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Beijing, Japan and Mexico along with the United States. One day addressed technology and one education, with lab and practical feet-on sessions, presentations and work with technical applications. Valarie Mockabee directed a concert of works restaged from score, from ballet, folk, modern and Baroque sources, and danced Valerie Bettis' *The Desperate Heart*.

The first motif symposium followed ICKL, with movement and theory sessions aimed at developing and coordinating usage in the growing community of motif users.

Shelly Saint-Smith, MFA candidate in Directing from Score, staged Hanya Holm's *Jocose* with coaching by Don Redlich. Redlich commissioned both work and score, one of four Holm dances, to preserve her concert dance legacy.

Sheila Marion has now provided the DNB with two successive staff members, Gina Jacobs and Mira Kim, for the NEA score transfer project.

## Broadcast News

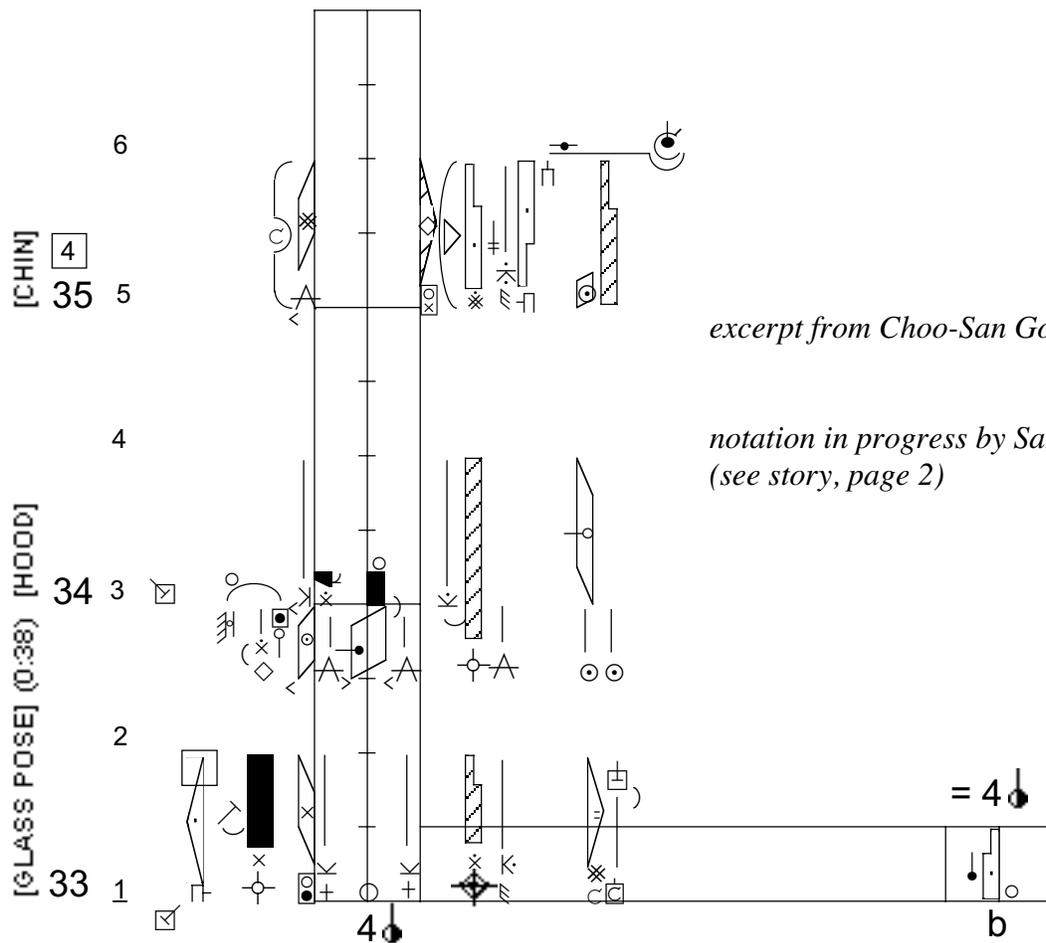
*In the Mainstream Department:*

A Labanotated clue was featured on *Jeopardy* in June, with DNB connivance. Ilene Fox was asked to provide the show with a sample page. She sent over a Doris Humphrey phrase, but no contestant had the solution. The correct question proved to be "what is dance notation?"

*Diagnosis: Murder* reran an episode that attracted our attention. In one scene in "The Red's Shoes" a Chinese dancer pored over a score while in hospital. Medical staff were amazed that mysterious symbols allowed him to rehearse by reading a book. Regrettably he was shown holding the score sideways.

## Fox to Address Brazil Conference

Ilene Fox has been invited to keynote a major international conference in Rio de Janeiro in August 2002. Encontro Laban 2002 will center around Laban-Bartenieff movement theory, incorporating both papers and art work, and will be held on the grounds of the Rio de Janeiro Museum of Modern Art. The conference is coordinated by Regina Miranda, who is also directs the Laban Center in Rio and LIMS in New York.



*excerpt from Choo-San Goh's BEGINNINGS*

*notation in progress by Sandra Aberkalns  
(see story, page 2)*

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