

NEWS
LETTER

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Got Through All of Last Year, and We're Here

The Dance Notation Bureau was faced with a severe financial challenge in 2005, as many readers and supporters became aware in October when layoffs of most of the staff became necessary in order to save the very existence of the organization. Simply put, much more money was going out, unsuspected, than coming in. It was a flood which had to be stanchled.

Two months on, there is real progress to report. Board members Lynne Weber and Senta Driver stepped into volunteer full-time management of the DNB, assisted by all the rest of the Directors. Lucy Venable, a champion of the Bureau ever since the 1950's, began flying in from Columbus, Ohio every month for Board meetings, and with the help of Sheila Marion is organising support around the country for the protection of the DNB's unique role in the dance heritage. Her leadership and fresh vision have been of special value. Notation Associates Mei-Chen Lu and Mira Kim were returned to staff within a week of the layoffs, and the Library has remained open and available for research throughout.

The crisis was covered in the print and Internet press, with a clear-eyed analysis of the problems we have shared with many arts organisations, and a welcome accuracy about what the Bureau does and why the work and Archives matter to the general public. The New York Times wrote, "Since it was founded in 1940, the Dance Notation Bureau has been at the forefront of dance preservation, and it has one of the most important collections of dance scores in the nation...Labanotated dance scores,

which can take years to create, are more precise than video recordings."

The public has responded powerfully. Over \$77,000 has been raised since November in contributions and new memberships. Two grants came in from funders who affirm their gifts are intended as a vote of confidence in the DNB. Major individual donors have confirmed, in several cases doubled, their standing gifts. Volunteers have also come forward to offer help and counsel.

These have gone a long way toward pulling the DNB back from its danger, and have greatly encouraged the management team. The Board and staff are firmly committed to rescuing, strengthening and regrowing the Bureau. The prospect is still challenging. The work is not nearly over.

In the process of reassessment, the Board has realised that creating an endowment will be an imperative part of securing the DNB's future.

The goal now is raising money to hire back staff and resume notating the choreography we so prize, and making it available on stage for future generations of audiences.

The New Team

Lynne Weber, Chair of the Board and Acting Executive Director, brings special talents to her new position. She has been a Certified Notator on the DNB staff and later earned a pair of University of Pennsylvania degrees at the same time, one being an MBA from the Wharton School and the other an MSE from the Moore School of Engineering in Computer and Information Science. While at Penn Weber worked on the first LN computerisation project. Her next location was in New York, managing

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consulting projects involving accounting and computer systems at KPMG. Conveniently, the job responsibilities included the rescue of firms in financial hazard. Weber then became a Vice President in computer systems at Goldman Sachs, heading a team that tracked trading and risk analysis.

Weber joined the DNB Board in 1983 and became Chair in 2001. She has served through more than one previous financial storm period, and her accounting skills have been immeasurably valuable in the present crisis. She believes firmly in the Bureau and that its survival is mandatory.

Senta Driver retired from choreography in 1991 when she closed her company. She had studied notation from the first stages of studying professional dance, with Lucy Venable, Helen Priest Rogers and finally Carl Wolz at the American Dance Festival, and the Ohio State dance faculty. Good authority has it she laid her share of challenges on the Festival teachers.

As a choreographer she benefitted from DNB programs that offered her free notation of *Resettings* and of *Missing Persons*, which for technical reasons could only be partially scored. She joined the Board in 1997, saying "I owed them. Without the Bureau, my work would have entirely disappeared. But they got me into the Library, where the essence of what I discovered about dancing will be available, in detail, permanently. Time to give back. Anyway, I'm continuously fascinated by the intellectual content of notation. I love to follow the thinking." She has been producing the newsletter for 9 years, and became Secretary of the Board in 2001. Since October she has worked full time with Weber, frivolously insisting on the title Lord High Everything Else.

The team's task is to assess and stabilise the DNB's situation, establish the size of its resources and the real costs of what we do, pay off all liabilities, and better reorganise the work, getting the Bureau ready for returning staff and a new salaried management team. Weber and Driver are testing the concept of authority divided between heads of finance and programs. This could ease the burden that traditionally falls on one overloaded individual. Driver has said, "we were trying to do too much; but this is a signal of the DNB's essential value, and of its mission's vitality. New ideas pop up for what we could do for the notation

and dance communities. We just have to learn what we can accomplish with our own strengths, and what we can seed and foster elsewhere in this burgeoning field."

New Approaches to Training the Teachers

In 2002 the DNB and the Extension at Ohio State designed a new approach to preparing the next generation of LN teachers. The year before, Lucy Venable had surveyed those who are using notation in the field, to assess what they wanted or needed from the DNB. This fed the Board of Directors' long-range planning. From the responses Venable gathered, it became evident that notation could, and should, start to play a role in all the parts of a dance curriculum.

Certified teacher training used to focus on presenting LN in dedicated notation classes. Student teachers designed their lesson plans for concentrated sequences in LN theory. To learn anything about LN, you had to take entire semesters in it, or miss out.

Odette Blum, the second Director of the Ohio State Extension, spearheaded the introduction of Motif and its movement concepts, as a new first stage in learning structured notation. This served to open up thinking in several ways: it gives two instruments rather than one for writing movement in more or less detail, and it encourages expanding the uses of notation before different audiences. Now teachers who want to bring LN into more of their courses have the choice of the flexible tool of Motif, or the more specific one of structured LN, for their purposes.

Trends in dance department curricula have challenged the position of notation. Many more subjects now compete for time and space. Faculty using LN have described the need to integrate literacy into all kinds of courses, so that students learning about history, composition, and musical form can see concrete dance material, briefly and exactly recorded, to amplify what they are learning.

This new need and opportunity calls for preparing notation teachers more broadly. The OSU Extension, which handles Teacher Certification, has been offering a revised training for 2 years that accommodates both focused presentation of LN theory and ways of incorporating it into other classes. The work was designed

by Extension faculty Sheila Marion, Valarie Mockabee, and John Giffin with Patty Harrington Delaney and Leslie Rotman, DNB Director of Restaging. The students, who all have teaching experience and have passed Intermediate LN exams, begin by preparing standard classes in notation and teach them to each other. They are then asked to design and present a class in another area of dance which they are currently teaching, introducing LN into that context.

Rotman has taught in two Teacher Training sessions (they are offered every 2 years, the next coming this summer) and comments that "they are producing much more interesting teachers...The [practice] classes I saw were fascinating, engaging."

Training the Notators

The Notators are the vital heart of the DNB's mission. As Board member Margot Lehman often reminds, "Without them we have no future." A new generation is now in Notator Training, with Jenn Garda and Mira Kim following a curriculum being revamped through the joint efforts of the Board of Examiners and recently Certified Notators. Garda is from Pittsburgh and is familiar to readers from her frequent projects reported in OSU Extension news. Kim's DNB work transcribing pencil scores into LabanWriter has made her the recognised expert in this software.

It is one thing to master the theory of LN. Those who enter Notator training have passed Advanced level exams, and both Kim and Garda are Certified Teachers. It's another thing to build the necessary skills to watch rehearsal sitting down and capture movement in detail almost as fast as the dancers learn it. The Notator must develop a keen eye for the action and the subtle style of a choreographer, an ear for the sound and music cues in use, and a discerning ability for research into necessary supporting materials. Above all, she learns to be fast.

As always the two-semester course is a mix of lectures, visits to professional dance classes and rehearsals to practice writing, and a final project in which the students choose and undertake their own certifying scores. The new approach includes less notating of class work, more notating of actual choreography, than before. Some of this

will be material already in score, which provides a useful reference point for the student to check her work.

For this course Ilene Fox arranged for her trainees to practice writing the Etude created by Carla Maxwell for the American Dance Legacy Institute in order to give students direct experience of Jose Limon's style (the Legacy Institute also commissioned notation by Mary Corey). In February they will go to Dallas to work with Patty Delaney at SMU as Pilobolus founder Alison Chase mounts *Alraune* on the students. Garda and Kim will there be able to check their work against Delaney's own score of the dance.

The classes analyse elements of a score that the Notators will need to produce: research into the work and choreographer's background, information on production elements, methods of laying out the notation for ease of reading. Senior Notator Sandra Aberkalns reviewed research methods and the art of locating the correct arrangement of the musical score (if applicable). Charlotte Wile was invited in to illustrate the use of Effort symbols to enrich the account of the choreography's dynamics. The New York Public Library generously arranged for Kim and Garda a private tutorial session on the Dance Collection's computerised catalogues.

After the Dallas trip one further extended writing project will be arranged, and then Kim and Garda will select the artists they want to notate for their certifying scores. They will work independently, supervised by a mentor and their final score will be reviewed in detail for grammar and movement verification by members of the Board of Examiners. At that point they will see their work entered in the DNB Archives and catalogue, available for study and restaging, and know they have joined a community of very dedicated and skilled professionals who can keep an artist's vision as richly alive, for good, as it was in her prime.

Profile

a series on DNB allies and LN users

Le Centre National de la Danse is a visible and growing force in Paris. It comprises a theater, fully 11 studios made available to choreographers both in residence and from the community, an archive, and even, with its own restaurant, a helpful meeting place for

dance people in the French capital. It offers a rich season of performances, conferences and seminars along with a library of printed and audiovisual materials that attracts 100 members of the public a day. In addition to these, there are presentations on career transition for dance professionals

The Centre is organized in four departments: creativity, pedagogy (in this area a diploma is granted), professional development and legacy, the area in which Marion Bastien, subject of the spring 2005 profile, works with both oral and notated sources. Centre Director Claire Rousier visited the DNB with Bastien in October for the Professional Advisory Committee meeting and to research work suitable for restaging from score. She took the opportunity to confer with Ilene Fox on ways her organization might work more closely with the DNB.

Rousier notes that the Centre reaches the professional dancer and also beyond, to the larger community. It has resources valuable to historians, restagers, and audience members. Among its most important holdings are the archives and extensive correspondence of Albrecht Knust, now being processed by Jacqueline Challet-Haas.

Notation is not taught at the Centre; students can take this at the nearby Conservatoire de la Danse. But many of the works presented in performance arise from LN scores. The 2005-06 season, for instance, will include Gertrud Bodenweiser's *Demon Machine* (1923) notated by Meg Abbey Denton, and Pio and Pino Mlakar's *Devil in the Village* (1935), notated by Knust.

The Library

Choreographer William Forsythe has granted the DNB permission to authorise access to the score of *Artifact II*, on his behalf, for scholars and for study in the classroom. The Librarian reviews requests and ensures protection of the performance rights without having to apply each time to The Forsythe Company in Frankfurt. The Limon Institute, directed by Ann Vachon, has similarly granted conditional unrestricted use of Limon scores. The DNB reports the queries to her, as it does to Forsythe, so they can be aware of the demand.

Mei-Chen Lu is supervising an increased use of the website for news stories, which she writes with Senta

Driver. The plan is to post one story each month or so on DNB affairs and another on restaging plans of interest. The arrival of new stories is signalled on the listserv *LabanTalk* as well.

Lynne Weber noted with gratitude the value of having been enabled to keep the Librarian on salary throughout the recent crisis. "With Mei there, the DNB was open and running normally for the community we serve. And she is the hands-down master of all the computers; we couldn't function without her brilliant troubleshooting."

OSU Extension

Director Sheila Marion was invited to keynote the annual meeting of the Taiwan Dance Research Society in December 2nd (her birthday) 2005. Host was the Taipei Physical Education College, where OSU graduate Rayuan Tsang is now teaching. Her topic was "Movement Analyses: Paradigms for Understanding Dance". Ann Hutchinson Guest, in Taipei for a restaging of Nijinsky's *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* from her score, also addressed the meeting.

Extension Graduate Associate Erin Tisdale spent the fall in Ireland on an Alumni Research grant researching her thesis that documents Irish dance in video and LN.

Deborah Friedes presented a project on Helen Tamiris' *How Long, Brethren?* for which the group dancers read their own roles from score and the soloist was coached by distinguished alumna Dianne McIntyre. Friedes will also dance Doris Humphrey's 1929 *Quasi Waltz* and stage Humphrey's *New Dance: Variations and Conclusion* as part of her thesis on the relation of individual to group.

Allison Smith is restaging from Mary Corey's scores three of the Repertory Etudes created by the American Dance Legacy Institute: one based on Anna Sokolow's *Rooms*, and David Parsons and José Limón Etudes still in progress.

Valarie Mockabee is now rehearsing the score-checking production of Mark Morris' *All Fours*, which will be detailed in the next newsletter. Notator Sandra Aberkalns will join her in Columbus in the spring when Morris reviews the staging for accuracy of the notation, so as to enter corrections.

RESCUERS, DONORS AND VOLUNTEERS

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Nancy Allison
Dominick Balletta
Marion Bastien
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Myron Beldock/Karen Dippold
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Doris Caravaglia
Jill Cirasella
Ray Cook
Mary Corey
Tina Curran
Cate Deicher
Patty Harrington Delaney
Michelle Demko
Virginia Doris
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Peggy Domer
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