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DNBulletin

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Database Planning Grant

The New York Foundation for the Arts, using funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, has awarded the DNB \$14,672 to plan a multi-media database that could be a new and comprehensive tool for restaging. Ilene Fox leads a team from the Bureau including Robin Hoffman, Sandra Aberkalns and new Librarian Bob Shapiro, working with James Willis of NIS/National Media Technologies (host of the DNB website) and Joe Locarro of Showbook. Locarro, who dances in *Ragtime* on Broadway, has produced a similar item, the Broadway Show Bible, used in *Ragtime* to collect all its production information.

The project aims to adapt commercial database software for a template that brings together all the information needed to mount a work. The team is examining the kinds of materials, such as notation, music, visual designs and video, that a restager would need to call up, and the kinds of pairings—notation with simultaneous video, notation with a hyperlink to lighting cues [particularly useful in William Forsythe pieces]—that different users might want to arrange. The project will finish in February 2000 with a template design and software recommendations.

The Helen Priest Rogers Collection Arrives

32 boxes of books, letters, films and photographs came to the DNB in July from Brattleboro VT, a gift to the Library under the will of co-founder Helen Priest Rogers. Cataloguing of the collection has just begun, and already reveals her wide-ranging interests in professional and educational dance around the world. The DNB is enormously grateful to Helen for this valuable archive, which illuminates her own career and her nearly sixty years' support of notation.

Spotlight:

Erick Hawkins technique

Ilene Fox has been working on a documentation of some of the principles developed by Erick Hawkins, for a book and videotape being produced for the Hawkins Dance Foundation by Renata Celichowska, on Hawkins' distinctive contribution to American modern dance. Celichowska, who danced with Hawkins and now teaches at NYU, wrote detailed discussions of exercises that illustrate her points, many exercises being accompanied by notation. Unlike most

involved Fox learning the material herself, from Celichowska, with reference to the videotaped demonstrations that had been produced earlier. She wrote as she learned. Fox had the benefit of a focused presentation from her teacher, concentrating on the depth of information necessary to a complete score. Because the notation would be spread throughout the book, Fox avoided using shorthand that might be hard to decipher in examples isolated from a context. Notator trainee Valarie (Williams) Mockabee read and performed the notation for Celichowska and Cynthia Williams, a Hawkins teacher, to check accuracy. Celichowska said of Mockabee's demonstration, "I watched while the Hawkins form magically emerged from the page into a living, breathing movement. The accuracy and depth of the reader's understanding of the movement gave me a whole new appreciation of dance notation and its valuable contribution in preserving Erick's work."

Runup to the 60th: Profile

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

Staff notator Sandra Aberkals is a first-generation American, of Latvian descent, who has divided her career between the US and Europe; between dancing and writing dances; and between Benesh and Labanotation. She knows four spoken languages as well as two symbolic ones, and it is notable that even as a child she would hear questions put to her in

Latvian and answer them in English, to the confusion of passersby. She says she still does something of the same thing in notation, swinging between Benesh and Labanotation analyses of problems.

Sandra grew up in Colorado, determined to dance. Her parents crossed the Atlantic for a new life, and she crossed right back at fifteen, to enroll in Rosella Hightower's ballet school at Cannes. Those three years were a high point at Hightower's school, and Sandra remembers Sonia Arova, Rudolf Nureyev, Maina Gielgud, Marcia Haydee, Richard Cragun and Egon Madsen attending class. She danced for five years in European and American companies, doing *Giselle*, musical comedy and jazz dance.

Notation came into her life almost incidentally, in impromptu sessions her very first summer in Cannes with a Frenchman who knew Benesh. Sandra thought she'd gotten very little out of them. Later she found letters she had written home at the time—in Benesh.

Entering the Benesh school in London in 1980, she was sent for writing practice to Millicent Hodson, who was then test-mounting her reconstruction of Nijinsky's *Le Sacre* on Royal Ballet School children. Later Sandra would Labanotate this same section, when the work was mounted on the Joffrey Ballet.

After completing her certifying score in Benesh, *Great Galloping Gottschalk*, Sandra came to the DNB in 1982 to teach elementary Benesh. She noted her students "were answering my Benesh teaching in Laban language." Maria Grandy pressed her to take Labanotation and Notator Training, and she paid for her tuition by

writing *Haiku*, a work by the Crowsnest Trio choreographers. Sandra was staff notator at the Paul Taylor Company from 1987-91, and relished that chance to work with one choreographer and a standing company, especially noting the dancers' influence upon the movement. She has delivered a paper at CORD on notation as an act of translation, another sign of her easy instinct for bilinguality.

Sandra is now at work on the first score to be done in color, William Forsythe's *Artifact II*. She determined that clarifying the differences among Forsythe's various levels of assignments set, alternative or improvised called for writing the material in three colors.

Asked what she would most like to work on some day, Sandra said she would love a chance to analyze Pavlova's dancing.

The Library

Good people attract the covetous eyes of other institutions, and Librarian Matthew Sheehy received an offer from the New York Public Library that could not be refused. He will be missed here. His substantial legacy of innovations and progress, especially on the computerization and Internet fronts, will be carried forward by newly appointed Librarian Bob Shapiro, whom the DNB is in turn taking from the Brooklyn Public Library. Shapiro is also a folk dancer with a personal

collection of over 1500 works in word notes.

Beverly Jensen has once more been handling Library business during the interregnum, with her customary flair.

ICKL at Barcelona

The 21st ICKL conference met July 25-30 at the Institut del Teatre in Barcelona for a celebration of the organization's 40th anniversary and a changed conference focus. Rather than trying to unify KIN and LN practice, the conferees identified and clarified their differing approaches for each other. Jacqueline Challet-Haas presented a paper on many of the KIN usages, in useful detail. Ilene Fox presented an illumination of philosophical differences underlying many of the differing rules. Ann Hutchinson Guest proposed signs to enable subdivision of 180° into 8 parts, in addition to the usual 6, which was adopted. Sessions were devoted to Motif Writing, and the analysis of Japanese and Korean dance. Notation of special types of work was discussed by Sheila Marion and Karin Sunke with Suzanne Bodak. Demonstrations of LabanReader, version 4 of LabanWriter, the Life Forms/LabanWriter Interface project and the possibilities of Motion Capture were also covered.

This conference marked the completion of Muriel Topaz' four-year term as Chair of ICKL.

Extension News

Valarie [Williams] Mockabee has returned to the faculty from a year's leave, during which she took Notator Training at the DNB and acquired a new, married name. She will do her certifying score this winter on a work by Bebe Miller to be announced, during Miller's residency and the setting of the work on OSU dancers.

Sheila Marion gave a paper at ICKL discussing the notation of Susan van Pelt's yoga warmup, which presented the challenges of recording " 'movement' that we don't see." Her solution involved the use of a parallel Motif score alongside the Labanotation, and Joukje Kolff acted as demonstrator. Marion was also on-site chair of the research panel.

John Giffin conducted two courses at the American Dance Festival incorporating Motif writing into composition and repertory. These were the first offerings funded by the Margot Lehman Project, which was underwritten by DNB board member Lehman's family and focused, by her request, on notation.

CLIP to Learn Elementary LN

A computerized version of the elementary Labanotation worksheets, called CLIP, or Computerised Labanotation Instructional Program, has been produced by the University of Iowa under the direction of dance faculty member Linda Crist. The program accompanies the third edition of the Labanotation textbook,

presenting lessons with Labanotation graphics and both multiple-choice and open-ended questions on topics such as the staff, gestures, circling and space measurement. Notation teachers may find this a useful tool in introducing Labanotation to their students.

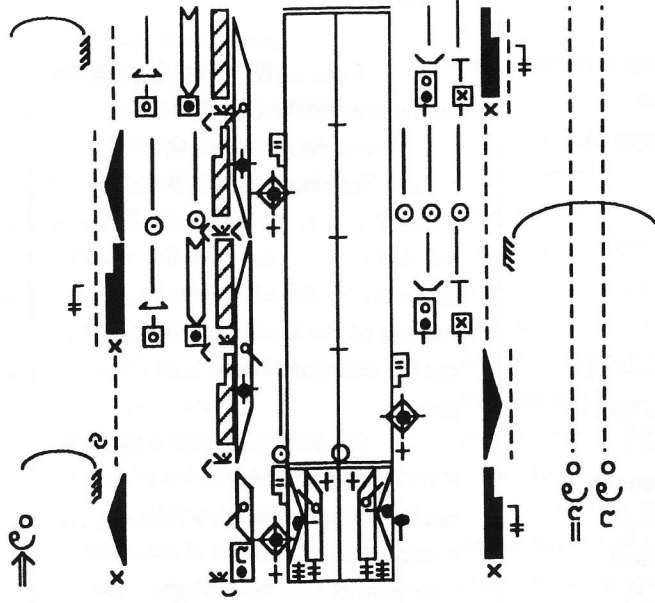
CLIP, available only for the Macintosh, may be ordered at a cost of \$100 from Associate Professor Linda Crist, Department of Dance, E111 Halsey Hall, University of Iowa, Iowa City IA 52245; 319/335-2183.

Dancing in the Millennium Sets Dates

The twenty dance organizations planning Dance Conference 2000 announced the dates of the Washington DC meeting. It will run July 19-23, 2000 at the Washington Marriott Hotel, 22nd and M Streets, and at nearby Georgetown University. Core sponsors for the event are the Congress on Research in Dance, the Dance Critics Association, the National Dance Association and the Society of Dance History Scholars; the DNB is a participating sponsor and Dawn Lille Horwitz co-chairs the Steering Committee. Information is available from Rima Faber at Dancing in the Millennium, PO Box 30070, Bethesda, MD 20824-0070; telephone 301/657-2883; fax 301/657-2882 or e-mail ndeo@erols.com

Erick Hawkins
Contraction Swings
notated by Ilene Fox

see Spotlight story inside



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